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PIERRE LOTI

NOTES OF MY YOUTH

PIERRE LOTI

NOTES OF MY YOUTH

FRAGMENTS OF A DIARY
ASSEMBLED BY HIS SON
SAMUEL VIAUD

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY
ROSE ELLEN STEIN

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
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1924

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First Edition

This is but a personal diary, which was written without thought of publication, and from which, in fact, many pages are missing, either destroyed by my father, or long since lost.

S. V.

FOREWORD

After returning for good to his old house at Rochefort, Pierre Loti decided to begin his personal diary, from which all of his works emanated, at the beginning. He gave his time to those episodes which occurred between the ones already published. We had already become acquainted with the unfolding of his precocious and subtle personality in the "Roman d'un Enfant" and "Prime Jeunesse." Who does not remember with delight the gay silhouette of the young gipsy he met in the woods, as well as that of a young "Parisienne," sophisticated little flower of the Latin quarter—the sentimental contrast of which made one see at once what was to be the life of the future writer, divided between the exotic revelations of his sailor's life and the search for all the refinements of sensations which would appeal to an imagination such as he had.

The present volume continues this new series. But Loti annexed the services of his son for what promised to be a lengthy work. He had

seen so much that it would take almost another whole life to tell of it. Although I well know the filial eagerness and the genuine talent apparently inherited by this collaborator (who is his father's most fervent admirer), I will not attempt to urge him out of the retirement which he intends to maintain in this task which no one could accomplish better than he.

The present volume takes us from the Naval School to the appearance of Aziyadé and from the very first lines, written on board the training ship, the *Jean-Bart*, and on the *Vaudreuil*, where he served his apprenticeship as officer of the watch, one can foresee the great talent of the writer, who so well knows how to hold us under his spell in relating his adventures in distant lands where Rarahu, Aziyadé, Fatou-Gaye, little Madame Chrysanthème, and others await him. Then the young sailor is transferred to the frigate *La Flore* to go to Tahiti, where he realized one of the dreams of his childhood. He was a midshipman only twenty-one years of age and he came back with his first masterpiece, still in the shape of daily notes. Not until seven years later will "Le Mariage de Loti" be put in book form, after "Aziyadé," which he will first live through in Salonica and Constantinople. Meanwhile, he had a year's cam-

paign in Senegal on the *Petrel* and the *Espadon*, where the infinitely precious material for the "Roman d'un Spahi" was collected. Then there was a period at the school of gymnastics at Joinville-le-Pont, preceded by a mysterious circuit in pursuit of a "best-beloved," a European woman whom he had met in Senegal with whom he had a final meeting, of which no trace remains in the diary. And many pages were, with very comprehensible scruples, therefore destroyed later, after the young writer's fame had made his notes a public document which forced him to eliminate certain indiscretions. The perusal is none the less captivating, were it only because of the charm of his style, which renders all delicious. But one also has the satisfaction of getting at first hand the writer's development, when, still ignorant of himself, he distils the pure honey of his spirit, not suspecting that others will feast upon it. And one continues eagerly, without paying attention to the lack of continuity of the attractive bait.

These exquisitely fresh youthful pages are dominated by a keen impressionability, a passionate desire for exclusive love, an attraction for simple people which probably accounts for his delight in contrasts, together with a little off-hand Byronic manner much affected by the

youth of that period. There is also the natural joy, which overflows all through, of discovering for one's self a world, much more unknown then than now, which was the lot of the sailors of a generation when one still navigated under sail in almost savage countries. This resulted in the acquisition of certain habits, a little rough, which are no longer in style. And no longer would a ship's ensign perform as a clown with a travelling circus, even though masked, as Loti amused himself by doing. And the adorable letter in which his mother wrote him concerning this unexpected and sensational appearance. "It is impossible, my dear son, for me to rejoice over your circus success. . . . I must admit, it is not the one that I dreamt of for you."

In a letter of June, 1878, to a friend to whom he had sent the manuscript of "Aziyadé," there was the first mention of publication. In March, this simple entry: "Two days spent in Paris, summoned by a telegram from Michel Levy, the publisher." And that is all we know concerning the thing which was to happen, all-important in Loti's life and in the history of French literature. There surely would be many interesting things to know about the reasons which decided Loti to address the public, about his hesitations, the advice and almost the collaboration he asked

of his friends — so doubtful was he of himself — about the difficulties which even so great a writer as he has to get his work published, and finally about the circumstances which led to the book being dedicated to Madame Sarah Bernhardt, the great woman of yesterday. Maybe there would be a whole little novel in which one would see a quartermaster, in a slightly fancy uniform, sitting among the first rows of the Comédie-Française, witnessing a performance of "Hernani" and being received by Doña Sol. . . . But it did not please the hero of this evening to tell us of it. Let us be satisfied to regret it, hoping that others will not take possession of other similar small details, in order to relate them in a more or less distorted fashion. Loti's enormous success and the important part that he plays in all these stories, will probably not fail to provoke the zeal of those scribblers who oftentimes present facts from the wrong angle. And maybe the best way to stop their sacrilege would be to satisfy the inevitable curiosity. It is very difficult for any one who rejoices in such fame to hide his life, as Bias, one of the seven wise men, advises doing to achieve happiness.

Happiness? Loti had all but that, if one takes the word to mean, not the result of one favoured by fate, but one satisfied with himself. For

genius demands the ransom of never being happy, probably because this splendid tyrannical gift causes an inequality in the state of balance necessary for happiness. That is why it is said: "Happy are the simple." And in the last analysis, that is the bitter lesson one learns from the reading of one of the most exquisite fragments which came from the pen of this then somewhat uneven master of his art whose career continued and finished with the full blooming of a glory as universal as it is undisputed.

EMILE VEDEL.

I must add with deep sorrow that Pierre Loti has died since this little foreword was written at his request. . . . Incalculable loss, felt by all the world! For no one could have known him, either personally or through his works, without passionately loving him. I, at least, had the cruel satisfaction of being present at the last moments of my incomparable friend, the intercourse with whom, both on shipboard and on land, was the greatest delight in my life. May I be permitted here to give to him a final supreme farewell, with the unlimited affection, gratitude, and admiration which will, I am sure, be shared by all who read this book?

E. V.

PIERRE LOTI

NOTES OF MY YOUTH

PIERRE LOTI
Notes of My Youth

At the naval school.[1]

LIFE was hard and austere in the floating cloister in which our youth had suddenly been imprisoned. From many angles, it paralleled that of the sailors which was thus being shown to us; like them, we lived very much in the wind, in the sprays, in the dampness which left a salty taste on our lips; like them, we climbed the yards to shorten the sails and tore the skin off our hands; we manœuvred the cannons in the old-fashioned way, with the tackle of tarred ropes of the ancient navy, and in yawls we progressed in spirals over enormous waves—in all kinds of weather, more often than not worried by squally west winds.

Seated at our desks in the vast broadside inside the cloister, we were absorbed for hours daily in

[1]As it was written much later, this unfinished chapter was to have been the beginning of a book which would have been a sequel to "Prime Jeunesse."

the cold speculations of mathematics, in the working out of the "dx" formulas, or in astronomy, and this managed to give our lives a sort of peace; it was as restful to our imaginations, to our feelings, as would have been healthful muscular fatigue.

The shifting fogs of Brittany danced their constant phantasies all about us under the cloudy skies, ceaselessly changing before our eyes the imposing view, the granite rocks of the coast, and the eternal movement of the waves of the sea.

All of us who had in the autumn begun this almost monastical life were from seventeen to eighteen years of age. From the first days, dissimilar as we were in taste, education, and dreams, we had separated into little groups which remained almost intact until the end of our two-year apprenticeship: we were formal, even among our most intimate, and were so ruled by the traditions of courtesy that I can remember no word of insult nor any quarrel.

Three or four times a week we would be landed for several hours on shore; sometimes it would be in the city of Brest, which would echo with the constant tread of wooden shoes tramping in the fine rain of Brittany, or it would be in some fishing village from which we would scatter into

the underbrush, to amuse ourselves like simple sailors, whose uniform we would wear for that day.

And twice a week, in the morning, there was infantry drill which took place in the dismal courtyard of the Marine Pupils, and to go there we left our ship in military uniform, guns on shoulders, with bayonet-swords in our belts. As soon as the gunboat had landed us in that deep inlet of granite in which the Brest Arsenal was piled up, we lined up like soldiers on the dock and marched off in step, preceded by bugles and drums. The Pupils' School was at the end of deserted streets where the grass grew between the gray stones. In passing through the silence of these streets, our music brought the women with their white head-dresses to the windows, and I can remember that one could always glimpse, within these simple interiors which were thus thrown open, some vase or figure from China, so that one felt that this was truly a city of the sea and that the masters of these homes had traversed many a distant ocean before coming back to rest under the hazy Breton sky.

This Pupils' courtyard, so enormous and forbidding between its huge walls, was gay for a moment only, during a rest in our infantry drill, for then the door would be opened to admit groups of the ladies of Brest, who were allowed

to enter to see those of us who were relatives or friends. Alas! I knew nobody. No one came to see me and it was always by myself that I took my little walk.

But, among the visitors, one young girl had captured my attention and each time I carried her picture, constantly more alluring, aboard the forbidding vessel with me. She was Brest's professional beauty, adorably pretty, fashionable, insolent; she appeared there like a queen, always surrounded by her court. . . .

On board the ship Jean-Bart,
Blidah (*Algeria*), *January*, *1870*.

. . . Daylight was already waning when we left M. Paul's Inn, at the end of the narrow passes of the Chiffa. The strip of sky which we could see above our heads was rosy with the setting sun, and the valley, which was still wet from the melting snow, was covered with a magnificent emerald-green tint.

M. Paul led us to the turn of the road, then handed us our whips, bade us good-bye, and advised us to urge on our horses in order to get through the pass before dark.

And so we began to gallop wildly, side by side, on the edge of the precipice. . . . The large palm leaves, the thick branches of the green

oaks, which were already becoming indistinguishable in the darkness, passed like shadows above our heads. From time to time the sinister outline of an Arabian shepherd, wrapped like a ghost in his white burnoose, would rise up in the brush.

And then, suddenly, the ravine widened and the valley of Medjerdah stretched before us in all its extent. . . . Our horses, excited by this view of the open space, went still faster and began that excited gallop which is known only in these native wilds. Night had descended; sharp outlines of distant mountains, on which were massed clouds, were visible on the still red horizon, and below us we could vaguely see the Chiffa, winding between the thick groups of the carob trees.

The air was filled with a perfume peculiar to Algeria. Bewildered on this barely marked road, numb with the cold, with the wind and with our speed, we let our horses guide us. . . .

After stopping for a short while at a planter's farm, we arrived at Blidah, one behind the other.

On board the ship Jean-Bart,
Syracuse (*Sicily*), *January*, *1870*.

Classic land, time-honoured olives, and always Etna—Etna sparkling with snow among the clouds. . . . How it reminds one of the

old Italian School landscapes! Antique ruins in pastoral fields, shepherds and sheep. . . . One feels all of winter's sad charm; but such a mild winter that one experiences no surprise at seeing palm trees, flowers, and cacti all round about. Syracuse is as dreary and mysterious as in the Middle Ages. . . .

This evening there was an "Italian sunset" on the waters of the gulf, and up above, Etna was on fire—like a brazier. Native sailors in feluccas which were covered with sacred paintings sang and played the harp along the shore.

I was coming from shore; I had been gone since morning in a launch getting a supply of fresh water from the spring in the Temple of Jupiter. I brought with me huge wild anemones of the palest violet, gathered at the base of the columns of the temple.

On board the ship Jean-Bart,
Smyrna, February, 1870.

Nine o'clock at night.—For the first time in my life I landed at Smyrna this evening. It was for military duty and I stayed only a half hour. It was raining in torrents and the night was inky black. Homeless dogs howled all through this labyrinth of dark, narrow streets. People, dressed like characters in a fairy story, passed

each other carrying lanterns, sticks, and weapons; long files of huge animals ambled by in the shadows, with the ringing of thousands of sharp little bells. . . . I realized that they were the camels of the big Asiatic caravans. . . . All of this appeared before me as in a dream. . . .

Four o'clock in the morning.—Still black night. Tiny streets like the pictures in the "Arabian Nights." A procession of midshipmen from the *Jean-Bart* in goloshes, each with a lantern in his hand. .

The midshipmen sing in chorus. The dogs howl lugubriously, and the Turks, startled from their sleep, appear at their windows, heads encased in nightcaps.

On board the ship Jean-Bart,
At sea, June 17, 1870.

While the sun was setting at 85° west longitude and 2° south latitude, I sat looking out of my porthole contemplating the bewildering splendours of this equatorial sky. Suleïma, my tortoise, was moving about before me in the bright sunlight and Zoïo, my monkey, perched on a pineapple which hung from the ceiling, was making faces at another old monkey who had climbed on to a water pitcher.

One of my companions remarked that poor

Suleïma, formerly so petted, was forgotten and that even her education was badly neglected since Zoïo's intrusion, he being so much more important. "However," he added prophetically, "Suleïma's turn will come again; poor Zoïo will be gathered to his fathers at the first frosts, while the tortoise, acclimated to your garden in France, will still be there in health and happiness a hundred or a hundred and twenty years from now! And then your grand-nephews will tell their children how one of their great-uncles, who was a sailor, brought this beast from Algeria. . . ."

At this point my companion was interrupted by the screams of his parrot, aggressively attacked by the old monkey, who had come down from his pitcher. But I again caught up the threads of my thoughts and continued to weave them within me.

Those unknown little beings, just now evoked, not yet created, who will live in some little corner of France, will give a fantastic tinge to this sailor—their great-uncle. They will visualize him, just as in my childhood I visualized Uncle Dit or Uncle Bon. . . . They will see me, dressed as in the days gone by, catching Suleïma in a strange country, illuminated with the vague light of dreams. . . .

This all made me think sadly of the future and gave me the idea of writing the detailed story of the circumstances which led up to the capture of the tortoise for these great grand-nephews.[1]

On board the ship Jean-Bart,
Denmark, September, 1870.

Eight o'clock at night.—Anchored at a Danish island, the name of which I don't know. The weather is quiet. A pale yellow sky is partly veiled by dark violet clouds.

The island seems completely covered with high thick forests, like those of Sweden: northern oaks, spruce trees, and venerable beeches. Characters of old Scandinavian mythology come vividly to my mind. . . .

Last night we were in Copenhagen, where they were celebrating the victory of Bazaine at Toul. The Tivoli gardens, illuminated among its flowers, looked like our Champs Elysées on holiday nights. . . .

They were having a concert for the benefit of the wounded soldiers of the French army; we were there and our uniforms attracted the attention of all.

We asked for "The Marseillaise"; a really

[1]This story, written much later by Pierre Loti, was published in "Fleurs d'ennui."

beautiful and stunning woman, dressed like the "Liberty" of '93, appeared before us with the French flag in her hand; she turned toward us and sang this "Marseillaise" as only a great artist could. We listened standing, transported. . . .

We then sent flowers to the lovely singer; and the audience applauded us; they had seen us moved—and were satisfied.[1]

On board the Vaudreuil,
At sea (*at the mouth of the Amazon*),
August, 1871.

To-night, as I began my watch, a phrase of music came to my memory and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could determine in what corner of the globe and at what part of my life I could have heard it. There is no tune which does not awaken thousands of memories in us. This one confusedly brought back choruses of human voices in the distance, something like a procession winding by with chants and music. And until three o'clock in the morning I unsuccessfully racked my brain, I dug down into my memories (which, at any rate, is a very pleasant occupation during a night watch). All kinds of

[1]All of Pierre Loti's diary which concerned his war campaign of 1870–1871 has been lost.

people passed before me, ceremonies in all sorts of cities spread over the world's surface. . . . Was it some religious hymn heard at night in passing a mosque?—or maybe some group of white burnoose wearers winding through the crooked streets of some Arabian city? Some sad song of Nubian women, under the hot sun of the equator?—or possibly a patriotic hymn of the people of the North, of Denmark or of Canada? It may have been an Indian feast song—Polynesian or Chinese? A fantastic nocturnal Negro dance? . . . Unless it was just the chorus of an opera? . . . But still it seems to carry with it a vague remembrance of guitars and mandolines, with a bit of warm wind from Spain or Portugal. . . .

On board the Vaudreuil,
Magellan, September, 1871.

The Straits of Magellan have become a very important thoroughfare for steamers; but nowhere as yet do the two dark shores of this wide strait bear any traces of civilization, and those sailors who, in passing, land there, can expect no help from such an inhospitable country.

On coming from the Atlantic, when one enters the narrow channels which separate Patagonia from Tierra del Fuego, one is struck at once

with the desolate aspect of nature. The first part of the voyage is between two vast plains, absolutely bare and deserted, especially at this time of year, which is the austral winter; frozen swamps everywhere, with their monotony broken only here and there by splotches of snow. They are enormous hunting areas used from time to time by bands of Patagonian nomads.

As one gets farther south, however, the country gradually changes its aspect and takes on another kind of desolation. Hills begin to rise and to be covered with a dark and cold-looking growth; groups of resinous trees, with black evergreen foliage, become more numerous and end by forming an impenetrable whole. One is soon surrounded by thick forests, above which snow-covered peaks or glacier edges stand out against a dark sky.

The horizon lengthens and the vistas show a striking grandeur; the ship continues its quiet course amid a veritable maze of mountains, of deep bays, of tiny green islands; clouds, which seem blacker than those of our French sky, spread their great shadows over the land, to which fog banks give an infinite variety.

A shapeless ruin, which is the only vestige of human building on this coast of Patagonia, serves as a landmark for the passing ships; it is what is

left to-day of Port Famine, a long-since abandoned attempt at European occupation, the name of which was scarcely attractive!

Cape Forward, the very end of the American continent, is a little farther south. It was in the shelter of this cape, in big Saint Nicholas Bay, that we lowered anchor and landed for the first time.

The surrounding country was entirely untouched, covered all over with an unbelievable tangle of forests, whose beautiful growth was half hidden by snow.

In the midst of this solitude, however, a thin curl of smoke showed the presence of human beings, and we went over toward it.

We found curious savages who live in the large island of the south and who are radically different from the Indian people of the continent. These ichthyophagous Fuegians are, from every aspect, on the lowest round of the human ladder and the Patagonians treat them like harmful animals when they come upon them.

We found them grouped about their huts made of branches in an exquisite site on the shore of a clear river: piles of shells and remnants of fish showed that the group had been comfortable and had made a long stay there.

These people were very much afraid of us.

Aroused from their shelter, their first reaction was to flee; their second, to ask for food, and a gift of some crackers made them mad with joy.

Small, frail, stiff with cold and uglier than would seem possible, they nevertheless promptly became not only friendly but even humorous!

Our trust in them was very limited, however, and we soon left them, taking with us as a remembrance some knives made of human bones with which to open shells, their only industrial product.

On board the Vaudreuil,
Tierra del Fuego, September, 1871.

The whole western part of that mountainous island, Tierra del Fuego, is covered with virgin forests, practically impenetrable. The sky is overcast and its climate compares with that of the coldest parts of Europe.

One can barely get about by holding on to the branches, through these ageless forests encumbered with dead trees; the ground is covered with rotten vegetation piled up for centuries in which one sinks almost out of sight. In this perpetual forest darkness the lichens have achieved an enormous growth, and everything is swamped under thick layers of these mournful gray mosses.

A singularly sinister atmosphere reigns in this

inanimate place during the sombre winter days. One's heart fails him amid this silence and solitude.

After having hunted with difficulty and at length in this country, we came one day upon something for which we were not looking—a band of natives in a state the primitiveness of which far surpassed anything we had so far seen: a state of complete wildness. It occurred one winter's morning, in the woods at the end of a hidden bay, where probably no European had ever penetrated before. The presence of these people was indicated to us by the sound of voices in an unknown key; advancing quietly through the thick underbrush, we presently came upon them, beholding a scene of hideous novelty.

These savages, either sitting or perched on branches, were eating their morning meal with the voraciousness of starved beasts; their dreadful dogs, who were eating with them, had not perceived us and so we could look at them for an instant without being seen.

The main feature of this breakfast consisted of mussels and various shell fish from the bay; but we also saw fragments of two penguins which these hungry people had not felt the necessity of cooking; repulsive young women were even biting into the unplucked wings.

Our arrival produced a terrific effect upon this family, which manifested itself at first by wild gestures and loud cries; then they all, in the wink of an eyelash, slipped and disappeared into the surrounding brush, and one heard nothing but a jerky noise from their throats, not unlike the noise made by furious monkeys.

We easily pacified them, as we had pacified others like them in Saint Nicholas Bay, by offering them crackers and bread.

We were promptly surrounded, examined, and touched with a great deal of curiosity; these people found us extraordinary and ridiculous to be dressed; they exchanged comments with an inimitably comic expression. Their hideous thin square heads were all cut from the same pattern, as happens with inferior unmixed races; their reddish brown hair—a colour frequently found in these Indian people—was long about their necks, short and bristly over their foreheads and on the crowns of their heads. Their entire costume consisted of long-haired coats of skins; neither the sharp cold nor any thought of modesty urged them to cover their ugly bodies, which were oiled with fish fat.

The canoes which had brought them there were made of several boards roughly made and joined; we found nets of braided reeds, knives

made of bones, as in the Stone Age, arrows and penguin eggs.

Our curiosity was aroused by a bundle of furs which they had hidden, but when we wanted to touch these, the women fell upon us with threats and cries. It turned out to be two tiny children, asleep in fox skins. We perceived that these mothers possessed the same amount of love for their young as do animals, and this raised them considerably in our estimation.

The southern coasts of Tierra del Fuego, swept by great snowdrifts and terrible winds, are completely bare; and on the most austral islands of the group, among them being the one which bounds Cape Horn, there is nothing but naked rock, given over to penguins and seals. These are highly dangerous seas, constantly whipped by huge waves and greatly feared by sailors.

Among these lands, Desolation Island seems to present an especially heart-rending waste and justifies in every particular the name which was given it. Vegetation is meagre and scarce, and one walks among doleful solitudes beset with lichens; in the far distance one sees a few decayed forests or even dead trees whose skeletons assume queer shapes blanched and twisted by the wind; and one always feels a damp and

depressing cold. More than that, there is no life, and everywhere there is the same dreadful silence.

On board the Vaudreuil,
Cape Horn, October, 1871.

A young seal was joyfully gambolling alongside the ship, but nothing seemed to justify such gaiety. We were at anchor between bare gray cliffs; Cape Horn's terrible wind whistled overhead, rapidly driving before it large black clouds in an already dark sky, and behind the dreary rocks which sheltered us from the open sea one could hear the waves roaring as always in bad weather. We were lifted by the swell even at the extremity of this dismal bay in which the water, icy cold and dark green, was striped with long streaks of white foam.

Everything seemed sinister and exiled about us, even the families of white-bellied penguins who formed ranks on each little island.

And still the young seal played joyously in the freezing water, and its happiness was touching in such surroundings.

He had a pretty, brown plump body, shining like polished agate. Between dives one saw his sly little head emerge, decorated with the handsome moustaches of a large cat; then he

would puff and sneeze like children who shake the little drops of water from their noses when they bathe.

The sailors began throwing him bits of fish, which he caught on the fly with the skill of a young clown. Then, as though thanking them, he gave them a little comedy, performing many leaps and graceful turns on the waves: one almost felt as though he were doing it for his audience, to amuse his benefactors.

Surely the poor little thing had never seen a ship; he came nearer and nearer, full of confidence, and the men were thinking of catching him, which would surely not have been difficult. But a shot rang out, the young seal gave one surprised look and performed his last twirl . . . We watched him beat the water, reddened by his blood, with his little flippers, and then he was nothing but a poor lifeless thing cradled by the swell. . . .

There was a quickly suppressed murmur of anger, for the lucky hunter, who had just bagged such a fine specimen, was a midshipman.

I wanted to avoid a scene, and so I waited until I was alone with my mate to tell him what I thought of him, and an explication followed which nearly ended in a fist fight.

On board the Vaudreuil,
October, 1871.

Some important, but very little known, channels start from the Straits of Magellan, and after going north, between the eastern coast of Patagonia and several unexplored islands, emerge in the Gulf of Peñas, about 6° of latitude below their point of departure. We were kept a month in these seas in order to explore them.

For a hundred and fifty miles we passed huge deserted countries; an uninterrupted forest stretched along the two shores, a forest in which surely nothing had changed since the beginning of the world.

The first channels into which our ship plunged were narrow and difficult; there were winding passages, squeezed between high mountains, so close that sometimes the masts, brushing against the branches of the ancient trees, shook down the snow upon our heads in passing.

But the horizon gradually widened, and with the silence of death we saw new chains of lakes and mountains, glaciers and high waterfalls, solitary and nameless streams of water, glide past us.

Nature seems to lose some of her bitter melancholy as one leaves Magellan and approaches the temperate countries of the North; the green

becomes less dark and less monotonous in colour and the woods begin to show patches of light. Under the arches of the old trees, all dripping with rain, the shadows are so thick in the deep valleys that it is almost night and down there one finds a great abundance of moss and unknown ferns of the most exquisite fineness.

Some small transitory birds begin to be heard in the branches and a beautiful green-crested kingfisher abounds in the rivers.

Water fowl also appear in great numbers; in passing we disturb numerous loons, wild ducks and geese with gorgeous plumage; all animals that taste very bad but which we are very glad to see, nevertheless. Gigantic mussels, which furnish food for the natives, also do us a great service; their shells all contain pearls, tinted pink or blue, which doubtless no one has as yet thought of using for ornament.

Landings and expeditions are very difficult things down here; one can never proceed, in these countries, without hanging on to the branches and one tires quickly of these sombre walks, of the silence and complete isolation.

The sailors spend their days in the woods, cutting trees, for lack of coal, in order to maintain the fires of the engine. They come back in the evenings, in the darkness of winter, wet

and frozen through, satisfied, nevertheless, if they can bring back some penguins or some shell fish for their dinner.

Every once in a while we find some natives, generally an unpleasant meeting and one which leads nowhere. The sailors have a kind of superstitious fear mixed with disgust of these men, and amuse themselves with them very cautiously, as though they were curious but destructive animals. As a matter of fact, it would be very unpleasant to fall into their yellow hands without weapons; although their customs are not yet well known, I believe that one would promptly be cut to pieces and eaten, with a great noise and shouting. Fortunately the smoke of their wood fires betrays them at a great distance and one is not afraid of an unexpected encounter.

Their camps, which are littered with piles of shells, bones, and much filth, give off an offensive odour, and everything about them is disgusting and repulsive. They show no sign of industry nor of any kind of organization; more often they live in families like orang-outangs, feed themselves by hunting and fishing, and pass a large part of their lives on the water.

Their canoes generally hold four or five persons, an equal number of dogs, and a fire which

burns carelessly, among some ashes, on the bottom of the craft.

Up at Queen Adelaide Island, we were disturbed one day by a canoe thus equipped, which was approaching us making signs of distress. The people, as well as the dogs, were madly howling, showing us huge gaping mouths and faces of another world; with a complete obliviousness of the danger, they threw themselves upon our ship at the risk of being knocked to pieces.

We thought them mad or possessed; they were simply starving, and in an instant the sailors filled their canoe with crackers and bread, which they devoured.

Several times after that our ship gave charity to the Fuegians, who often became sufficiently courageous to come on board to beg for food. There was once a great panic among them. One day a large group of them was on the deck, voraciously eating the remnants of the crew's soup, quite ignorant of the fact that the diver had descended to examine the keel of the frigate. When they saw the huge round head of this unknown monster emerge from the water, their terror was indescribable; in a second they had flung themselves overboard, leaving their canoes and dogs, and we watched them regain the shore with rapid strokes.

People like these fit perfectly into their curiously wild environment, and when one is with them one can well believe himself transported back to the far-distant days of prehistoric man. Other kinds of men would be far less effective and appropriate under these black skies and in these primitive forests.

On board the Vaudreuil,
October, 1871.

The first beautiful October days—the April of austral spring—give to these surroundings a much less sombre charm.

Gorgeous scenery is mirrored in the calm water. All the birds of the southern seas, the big albatross and the petrels, follow the ship on its quiet course in flocks and circle madly about her.

Our last port was Eden Harbour, an exquisite bay which lies before the Gulf of Peñas—and then, our mission being over, we steamed out to sea toward Peru.[1]

Frigate La Flore,
Valparaiso, July 23, 1872.

We arrived here this morning from our beloved Tahiti after a quick crossing, and I was

[1]Here, in the diary, is the story of a putting into port at Easter Island which has already been published in "Reflets sur la sombre route," and then follows the whole manuscript of "Le Mariage de Loti."

surprised to be met by a mass of recollections which I had unsuspectingly left here. . . . Still, it is always somewhat like that, one experiences certain indefinite impressions in every spot which seem to depend on circumstances and are especially dependent on climate, the turn of the countryside, the smell of the country. Leaving, one takes a few along; but some are always left and one only reclaims those later, on returning.

This wide bay, these gulls, these red mountains, these unbelievably high peaks of the Andes covered with snow which stood out at dawn all rose against a pale green sky—all this world of things I greeted like old friends. This sight revived a great number of old forgotten emotions, quite intangible, related to our arrival in the southern seas. . . .

It was here, several months ago, that I was able to leave the *Vaudreuil*, which I disliked, to sail on the good frigate *La Flore*, and finally to leave for Tahiti and thus realize the dreams of my whole childhood.

The day is radiant, the sky cloudless; it is one of those brilliant winter days, already a little warm, on which one anticipates spring and on which also it feels good to bask in the sun after the cold winds and storms at sea.

Three letters from France, in the afternoon. . . .

To his friend Jean B——, naval officer.

Rochefort, March 26, 1873.

My dear little Brother:

I don't know what has become of you since we parted. I don't know where to find you nor where to write to you.

After saying good-bye to you at the station in Juan last week, I mournfully walked back along the gulf; it was raining and blowing, terrible weather, a veritable destruction; trees were broken, the road encumbered with flowers and branches of orange trees. I saw the fleet with steam up, ready to leave.

All day I wandered around the country, soaked to the bone, not knowing what to do with myself. I ate eggs and black bread for my lunch at that queer hut on the beach—you know, the one belonging to the old fisherman.

In the evening, after all the boatmen around had refused to launch a boat to take me on board, I went up to Vallauris and dined at an inn, and then I went to Cannes to sleep, with the rain still pouring down my back in torrents.

At the hotel I found out that Christine, fearing that I was drowned, had left the house to get some information.

It wasn't until the next day that I could get on board. I arrived just in time to take the noon watch and do the following: let out the sails, cross the top-gallant sail, take the launch and boat on and off again, etc.

At four o'clock with my leave granted I left the frigate[1] in weather that had suddenly become beautiful.

I took one more walk in Vallauris to see once again the spot that we called "the corner of Easter Island" and the one where we had sung Tahitian songs. It was a glorious evening; the orange trees perfumed the air, and I picked enormous bouquets from them to give away in Paris.

And I stayed for one more quiet, happy moment dreaming of our fine schemes on the Vallauris roads which we had so often gone over together.—Our six-months vacation, dear little brother! We had sighed for it for so long! What a pleasure it would be to welcome you to Rochefort, now that we have begun to travel around the world!

That night I sailed for Cannes and Toulon.

[1] *La Flore.*

Would you believe, little brother, that I left our poor room at Toulon with real regret and sketched the cat before I went?

This was Friday. I arrived in Paris Saturday evening and I have been with my family since this morning.

To the same.

Rochefort, April 25, 1873.

My dear Brother:

I am busy arranging our corals and souvenirs of Tahiti properly in our little case, so that you will find everything in order when you come; but if you should not come, I believe that I should not have the courage to continue it and that I would leave everything at loose ends.

My sister left yesterday. The pretense of summer that we have had for several days has also left; this morning winter is here again, gray and almost cold; you know that that doesn't help very much to make me happy or make me paint the future in very attractive colours.

And then, above all, once I become an ensign, I fear that I shall have said good-bye to Tahiti for ever.

To the same.

Cherbourg, June 27, 1873.

DEAR BROTHER:

I am writing from your room in the Hôtel du Nord, which I will leave in an hour with regret, as it still is full of you. However, it no longer has the untidiness your being here caused, but I can see the road and from the first floor I see your garden with the nymph in the centre; you have made all this dear to me. Fortunately, I have been very busy since you left and I have barely had time to think.

Last Saturday in Paris, I had news of Tahiti from V——, the missionary's son, whom I met walking past the "Maison Dorée."

All the Europeans whom we knew there have left.

The little Pomaré girl died and the whole country was upset; the Tahitians cut off their hair as a sign of mourning, holidays and funeral ceremonies lasted four days, and all the natives from neighbouring islands came and joined in. The old queen Pomaré had a hut built near the tomb of her granddaughter and remains locked up in there all the time.

Yesterday, I went to see poor Emma, who was alone. She sang the "Waltz of the Leaves"

and that low-voiced bit of "Black Eyes" which she said she had not sung since you left Cherbourg; it recalled that part of our lives so vividly that she concluded her song almost in tears. . . . I really don't know just what to make of her nor how to judge her, but I think it is my duty to remain on friendly terms with her.

To the same.

Rochefort, July 5, 1873.

DEAR BROTHER:

Thanks to M. Ségur, whom I already like very much, I will soon join you in Senegal. I have official orders to ship on the *Petrel;* means of transportation will soon be decided by a second telegram from the ministry.

To his sister Marie.

Dakar, Sunday, October 3, 1873.

DEAR LITTLE SISTER:

It is one o'clock in the afternoon and the whole town of Dakar is buried in the joys of the siesta.

I alone am awake so that I can write to you, to be ready for the steamer which might arrive at any moment; I am on my balcony in a comfortable chair and as there is nothing opposite

me in the way, I can see the whole basin, smooth as a mirror.

Imagine this scene which is already so familiar to me: near by, the motionless *Petrel* with sharks sporting about her, and farther away, on the other side of the bay as far as one can see, vast plains of empty sands; not a breath of wind to stir the air, through which noiseless vultures go and come—an intense heat and complete silence. . . .

This all has charm, but it is all sad, and the prospect of spending two years with all these things is sometimes discouraging. . . .

The weather was lovely in Saintonge when you wrote to me; maybe you are having one of those mild October Sundays to-day, with the pale sun, like those which always recalled so many dear memories of my childhood.

The leaves are turning and already beginning to fall here in Dakar, but winter is the best season in Senegal, and when the heat is over in November we shall make our annual journey through the rivers of the south.

I am going through a period of laziness and inertia; I have sketched nothing as yet, although there are plenty of models. The white quarter of Dakar is barely as large as the village of Fontbruant; beyond it, everything is curious

and one would like to paint it all; in the black quarter, one doesn't know where to go first. I shall begin when the weather is good; I also have to wait for the paints which I asked you to send me, as one can get nothing here.

I saw *L'Illustration* this morning and I was utterly disappointed. They published only a very much cut part of my article, with two of my worst drawings, which, in addition, are very badly reproduced; it certainly is discouraging.

On board the Petrel,
Dakar, October, 1873.

To-day, October 28th, two marine infantry lieutenants and myself dined with a friend of ours, a sharpshooter second lieutenant.

Célina and Suzanne, negresses, waited at the table and danced between courses.

It was a select group and one would look far before he found four more different people, who enjoyed each other so much. And still never has a dinner been less gay nor conversation more lugubrious.

Our host, the second lieutenant, was a young prince, who was ruined at the Austrian court when he was twenty years old; the two marine infantry lieutenants were an old sailor and a poor young fellow who had become an officer at the

age of thirty-two, through his own efforts, and had been a Parisian dandy.

Our host's house was in an isolated part of the northern native quarter, near the mosque. His terrace overlooked a wide square on which the important dances, the bamboulas, take place, and also commanded a view of the sea.

After dinner, I sketched his monkey, his negresses, and then him himself—in the prince's album.

Wild amusements in the streets finished the evening. Gathering a noisy group of dogs before the governor's door was the most successful.

At midnight, hailed the *Petrel* from the deserted wharf.

On board the Petrel,
At the mouth of the Mellacorée,
Guinea, November, 1873.

On a beautiful tropical night we landed at Benty and were immediately taken to Miss Mary Parker.

Miss Mary, the queen of the district, was in a thatched cottage in which were piled the most varied lot of objects—a sort of museum in which everything was sold—as a matter of fact, the only shop of the place.

Miss Mary, who is about twenty years old,

comes originally from Sierra-Leone and is, I must admit, a very successful example of these negro races who parody British clothes and manners. Miss Mary is black and kinky; a kind of compromise between a foreign young lady and a savage: a comical person, but one who is keen and even has some charm.

The station of Benty, at the beginning of the Mellacorée River, consists of several native huts and a single house which is very white and surrounded with many flowers; all buried in tropical trees. And, on coming out of the doleful sands of Senegambia, it would seem charming if one felt as though one could live here as elsewhere; but here, as in Gabun, one is seized almost at once with a certain indefinable uneasiness, the heat gets on one's nerves, and fever is in the air.

Our days pass in walks and tiring and adventurous hunts, and every evening we gather in Miss Mary's "curiosity shop." This place is unbelievably, concentratedly hot and has an aromatic odour all its own.

Miss Mary receives with an English formality which would be a terrible bore anywhere else, but which is amusing here, in this young negress's remote hut.

She spends the rest of the evening in selling us quantities of things, while providing us with

several bitter-herb and warm-water concoctions.

One penetrates into these Guinea forests through vague trails where snakes abound. . . . There is never a feeling of well-being, never a breath of freshness in these paths; whether it be in the evening, at night, at dawn, there is always the same suffocating and damp atmosphere; one feels that all these growths are evil and one is conscious of breathing fever. . . .

Much of the land is marshy, covered with totally inaccessible mangroves which give off fatal miasmas from their warm and stagnant waters.

No doubt this country will always be a place of exile, unwelcome to all kinds of civilization, and Europeans will come only as fugitives in search of fortune at the risk of health and life. . . .

When the time came for us to leave the Mellacorée, Miss Mary was very much upset, she could not manage to pack up all that she had sold us and got all mixed up with her packages. Our purchases consisted of mats, of strings of native beads, whose bitter and penetrating odour is one of the characteristic smells of the Guinea coast, and especially of gourous, a small fruit tasting like acorns, which grows abundantly

here, and of which the Senegal negroes are very fond.

In her hurry, Miss Mary lost her hair-net, and her short kinky hair, divided into stiff braids, stood out all over her head like numberless little antennæ and gave the most comical effect.

She no longer bears any relation to the civilized young lady: the native is in the ascendant; but she is so amusing and such a good sport that one could still find her almost charming. Before we left, she asked us to bring her from Saint Louis, when we came on our next trip, a hat trimmed with pink flowers, the selection of which she left to our taste.

On board the Petrel,
At the mouth of the Miñez (*Guinea*),
October, 1873.

Hafandi is a village of round huts, with pointed roofs, on top of which are curious ornaments which serve as regular perches for enormous vultures. A few huge leafless trees, of abnormal growth and completely out of proportion with their environment, raise their bare gray outlines above the huts.

A clearing of tall dry grasses surrounds the village and beyond, on all sides to the horizon, is the equatorial forest, intensely green, with its

tangle of palms twisted like huge ferns, of thick trees, of creepers, and here and there, thrusting themselves up above all this confusion, slender tall palm trees straight as columns.

We came here to negotiate with Babou Manguil, the chief of this district, and we were conducted to his quarters, which were a sort of little fort surrounded by a mud wall pierced with loopholes. He had been informed of our arrival and had prepared a semi-official welcome for us.

We found a black crowd already assembled before his door and Babou Manguil himself came out to meet us.

The festivity, got up in our honour, began with a chorus accompanied by a tom-tom and a sort of series of sticks which got their tones from several calabashes fastened under the keyboard; the notes of this instrument give out a true sound, according to the negro scale, and the resulting noise is very pleasant.

Then a band of babies, about three or four years old, all a pretty reddish brown, plump and shiny, performed a very complicated dance with the tom-tom, with studied attitudes and the solemnity of grown-ups.

When the reception was over, we had to talk over our trading with Babou Manguil. We se-

cured some of the fine mats of the country, for which we paid him good money.

The discussion over the bargain takes a long time but is carried on in a courteous manner; the women join in and the public listens attentively; after a half hour, the price is cut in half and the transaction is concluded.

On board the Petrel,
Dakar, December, 1873.

One morning we left for Dakar N'Bango in a bark manned by eight black rowers. Such a funny idea, to go on a picnic in such a country! Three French women from Dakar were with us.

When we arrived at Pop-N'Kior, we left the big yellow river to plunge into the little streams of Senegal.

Dakar N'Bango is buried in unhealthful marshes; there is an abandoned hut the key of which has been given us for our use to-day; some oleanders barred the entrance; this hut is situated in the middle of a wood where the soil is stony—a very unusual thing in Senegal.

We stayed there all day.

In the evening we tramped through the woods. The sky had autumn tints—the sun set behind peaceful pink clouds; one would almost think it was a lovely fresh October day in France.

The charming old-looking ground is covered with graminaceous plants and dry grasses, and the patches of shrubbery, arranged almost formally, have begun to change their leaves to the red and gold of fall, and one has to look very closely to realize that they are exotic; grasses and reeds such as we have in our country grow in the ponds. . . . It looks just like a woods near Rochefort. . . .

The ladies who were with us, although they were Creoles, had long blonde curls, small crêpe hats, and long black dresses.

Night is falling, and as we go farther on, the illusion that this is France grows stronger and more curious. We come upon a country house and I am no longer even astonished; it has a calm and pastoral look, like "La Limoise"[1] of long ago.

An oldish woman in a gray dress, a light mulatto, received us; she showed us to seats in the garden, under a low arbour covered with dying plants just as at home in the fall. . . . I felt as though I were under the old arbour at "La Limoise," covered with honeysuckle, which I knew when I was a child. . . .

An old gentleman came up; they told him my

[1] "La Limoise" was the country house in which Pierre Loti as a child spent nearly all of his vacations.

name, which seemed to affect him. . . . He explained that he was a childhood friend of my father; he told me about their youth which they had spent together, about a play they had written in collaboration. . . . Then, when we spoke of my mother as a young girl, his eyes filled with tears. . . .

And then I suddenly remembered the rather unusual story of my host; one of my aunts had once told it to me. This story goes back to the time when my father and mother were engaged.

At that time, about 1830, this old gentleman was a young doctor in the marine service. He lived near my father at Rochefort; they were very intimate and often visited their neighbours, the parents of my mother who was still a young girl, together. My mother was very pretty and the young physician fell madly in love with her; but when he decided to ask for her hand, he learned that she had already been promised to my father for a long time. . . .

The poor man never got over it. He left Rochefort immediately and settled here in this loneliness, where my presence to-day, by the merest accident, revived all these memories.

I understand now why I got the impression of coming to a familiar place when I arrived.

This old colonist had often been at "La Limoise" before he had the great sorrow which caused his exile; he must have been charmed by this old house in Saintonge and have been inspired by it when he built his refuge in the depths of the Senegalian marshes.

In his unusual garden, he is determined to cultivate several of the vines and plants of France.

In the dim twilight our bark called for us at the very foot of the doctor's house. Before getting in, I picked some branches that reminded me of those of Roche-Courban.

On the way back, on the calm water in the moonlight, I thought of the youth of this old doctor. Those days are not so far distant and still they seem so queer, so different from ours; it was the romantic age, in which a whole life would be ruined by an unhappy love affair. To-day, we can hardly understand such feelings; they seem even a little ridiculous, because we are too sceptical, and too blasé.

As we reached Pop-N'Kior, a great big fish suddenly jumped up to the face of one of our three friends, gave her a terrible blow, and fell into the boat. This tragi-comic incident drew me from my dreams.

On board the Petrel,
At sea, December, 1873.

I just discovered that this is Christmas night. . . . This sailor's life that we lead gets us all confused as to the months and days. . . .

But this Christmas night on shipboard means nothing to me; it has no connection with the lovely cold, bright nights of our country. The temperature is warm, the sky cloudy, although there is a small crescent of moon showing. The *Petrel* is moving toward Cape Verde, all sails spread, and the negresses who are travelling crowd the deck all wrapped up in their clothes. . . .

The darkness is transparent on this calm sea. One breathes a humid heat, together with the exotic odour of the perfumes of the negresses. . . .

I remember a year ago at the same hour I went with my mother and Aunt Claire to the hall in Rochefort; we were going to see the Christmas tree as a reminder of my childhood. And all of a sudden I heard a voice in the street singing, as it did years ago: "Fine warm cakes"; so the old cake vendor, who had already seemed so old to me when I was a little boy, was still living! Oh, how far back in my life this unchanging old

song took me! It seemed to me that it brought back all the winter evenings of my childhood, around the fire, in the big sitting room. . . . . To-morrow, we will wake up at Dakar, where our hut, our sand dunes, and our bare old baobabs covered with vultures will be awaiting us. . . .

Dakar, January, 1874.

I am in a place where we often go in the evening; I am writing on a table in the public garden in Dakar.

Some time ago the missionaries planted this garden, which is like an oasis in the middle of this sand country. It is a big park full of horrid animals where one never sees any one excepting ourselves; but one has a view of the sea, and the paths are edged with lovely tropical shrubs, which are full of flowers in summer. And it is also the only spot in the country where there is shade and coolness. The trees are now growing wild and the vultures go about in flocks, like turkeys.

In some of the corners they have planted cocoa trees, oleanders, and large hibiscus plants with red flowers, which look like those in Tahiti. . . . During the summer, it made us dream we were there. . . .

But now it is winter, the broiling winter of the tropics, and everything is bare.

My rustic table, bored by termites, is hidden under masses of bamboo with its slender leaves and delicate native palms with long thorny leaves. There is never a trace of moss, never a grain of grass on this red earth, on which bamboos and palm trees throw their slim shadows. . . .

. . . And now the sun has set, night is falling, and my thoughts run to sadness. . . . Far away, the rapid beats of the tom-tom are calling the negroes to the bamboula. . . .

A disagreeable wintry wind is beginning, bending the shrubs down to my head and sending dead leaves over me; it is getting cold and quite dark. . . .

On board the Petrel,
Dakar, January, 1874.

I miss the first months I spent in Senegal when I arrived. Everything was new to me and I still found my long walks in the torrid sun, through sandy paths where my foot sank down at each step, attractive.

I returned from these walks in the starry transparent nights amid a mad concert of crickets and grasshoppers; and the air was full of the hot

summer scents; the fireflies flitted among the bamboos like thousands of stars.

At the dock, black Samba Fall and Damba Taco were waiting for me in the dingey and took me on board ship; a long, phosphorescent train followed us.

At the table we ate little, but there was an abundance of ice and cold drinks.

And now, it is winter: no more green, no more rain, no storms, not a leaf nor a drop of water; nothing but complete drought for six months. . . .

I preferred the prostrating days of the approaching winter months. Possibly I am worn out by the climate, but it seems to me that everything is getting colourless; the whole country is growing pale and bores me.

On board the Petrel,
Dakar, February, 1874.

Mahomet Diop, the king of Dakar, has just died. He had been failing for a long time; but this big six-foot old man had been able to maintain a strange and genuine majesty and the governor himself had some respect for him.

As a matter of fact, this king was very imposing, with his air of an old black mummy; his shrivelled-up features had kept a certain dignity,

and his eyes, although dulled, still seemed stubborn and a little sly. He was the chief needed for this mournful country in which the sun dries up everything, as though to preserve things eternally.

Mahomet Diop wore a sort of Phrygian cap and was clothed in long and flowing robes, like the philosophers of old. He was, of course, covered with amulets; from his neck hung numbers of queer objects—giraffe and gazelle horns, pieces of other animals and several leather cases containing verses from the Koran written on little rolls of parchment; all these amulets, hardened from the heat and by time, seemed as old as old Diop.

The royal hut, like those of his subjects, consisted of four boards covered with a large straw roof; pumpkin calabashes decorated this structure with their yellow leaves. Inside, many shields, native arms, and charms were hung on the straw walls, on which light blue lizards with orange heads confidently walked about.

When I first went to Senegal, I asked permission of the king to paint his portrait; he accepted with pleasure and posed for me, surrounded by his old favourites and his grandchildren.

On board the Petrel,
March, 1874.

Our big house in Dakar, which I had decorated with such pains, was very original. We had become attached to it and we had even become attached to Mademoiselle Marie Félicité, the old mulatto woman from whom we rented it.

This house was divided into two parts by a partition which was built halfway up. The modest room in the rear, which contained our beds, looked out upon the garden. The walls were built of old boards that were dried out from the sun and whitewashed. Blue lizards ran all about and there were also large flat spiders that filled me with a deep horror.

The front room was sumptuous; it had a porch on the deserted street and was completely carpeted with white mats with great native luxury. The door in the rear, framed with decorated lances, was hidden by a long portière of brilliant colours; there were oriental couches, trophies of gazelle horns, fencing swords. There were also the skull of a hippopotamus and the skin of a giraffe which we had brought back from Podor.

My greatest pride, a piano, was in this room. It was a piano which happened by accident to be

for sale by some French people in the town. It came originally from the Emperor Napoleon III's yacht and had sailed the sea under all skies before it was cast away in Senegal. At first its price seemed too big for my ensign's pocket-book, but as soon as I touched the keyboard I was won over by its wonderful tone and I could not help buying it. It had a deep, soft, and sort of distant tone, which delighted me infinitely at such times when homesickness overcame me in this house in exile.

I remember one night, alone in our room, when I was trying to recall on the piano a melancholy negro melody in a minor key, hearing behind me a slight gliding like something very smooth, but quite heavy, that one might have been cautiously dragging across the matting. An instinctive movement of fright made me turn my head around quickly just in time to see a large sand adder glide through a hole in the floor.

My playing had attracted the snake and I succeeded in making it come back several times after that; but to accomplish it, there had to be complete calm in the room and I had to play sad tunes with high notes for a long time without stopping.

There was an old bench protected by two tall oleanders on the porch where green humming

birds, which sang during the midday heaviness in their tiny sweet voices, nested. I had taken possession of this bench for my siestas, and all around me the everlasting chirp of the grasshoppers arose out of this peaceful nature in the enervating heat. Occasionally the song of some Nubian woman would reach me: a sharp sad song which fitted perfectly into these exotic surroundings of sun and sand.

How childishly we had set about arranging the house of old Marie-Félicité with local colour! We had to have native animals around us, as do all self-respecting colonists, and the first necessity seemed to be to acquire a tame marabou.

When you first look at it, this bird does not seem very decorative; still, after living for a long time in Senegal, one begins to feel that its mournful and contemplative hieratic manner is appropriate to this strange, unchanging, desolate country.

The first days of the marabou under our roof were most felicitous. We became at once trustworthy friends and did not tease him, as young officers, who are the torment of others like him and who play all sorts of unpleasant jokes on them to enjoy their comic manner of offended dignity, often do. . . .

This large solemn bird, a little absurd, realized that he impressed us with his bald head, always

bent forward as though he were in profound meditation, and his black wings which hung down at his sides like long sleeves of Moghreb wise men. His walk was slow; he assumed the air of an officiating priest to accomplish the most unimportant acts, and even in his gluttony he was full of unction.

In spite of our stuffing him with fish and meat, the most diverse objects would disappear into his white belly with a loud snap of his big dried-up beak.

As a rule, we did not interfere except in his own interest after he had swallowed something which was really too indigestible; for example, a copper candlestick which stuck to a candle, his favourite food! His expression had become worried, his beak was half open, he began to gasp, and it became urgent to have recourse to a delicate operation to which he submitted with good grace: one of us took the bird by his legs and turned him head down while the other hit him on the neck with a stick until the object which would not go down fell to the floor. After he was released, the marabou resumed his majestic dignity.

Our second acquisition was a darling parrot. This bird was especially cajoling and won us over immediately. When we wanted to scratch its little green head, it would bend its neck and

look at us so sweetly out of the corners of its pretty round black eyes.

Alas, it did not stay with us long, as it soon fell a victim to the marabou's voraciousness.

Our two birds had seemed to get along very well together, and the marabou would often accompany the parrot in its walk in the garden, with the protecting and attentive air of an older brother. We were far from expecting the outcome.

One day the big bald-headed bird was especially gentle to his companion. He waddled about in front of it on his big feet, as though he were unable to express adequately his great love, and we watched this touching spectacle, quite moved. But suddenly, before we had time to stir, the big beast's beak opened wide and closed on the little parrot with its characteristic snap. . . . Needless to say that the wicked, hypocritical thing was quickly turned with his feet in the air, and the beatings of my stick on his neck were this time without mercy. The poor parrot soon reappeared; its heart was still beating but all its little bones were crushed and we could not save it.

The marabou surely repented of his crime, for our parrot was replaced with the most mischievous monkey possible.

As soon as he saw the newcomer, the big bird realized that he would no longer be the undisputed master of the place. He retired pompously to a branch in the garden.

And our home lost its monotonous quiet during the nap hour. Instead of sleeping, we were constantly making peace between our guests. The fault was unquestionably the monkey's, as he always began it. After meals, as soon as he saw the gorged marabou close his old gray lids, he would softly go up to him and roughly pull out some of the black feathers that ornamented his tail.

The monkey would then get a violent peck and would often run away with his head bleeding. But the beautiful feathers were so irresistible to him that he could never refrain from doing it again.

This performance lasted several months. The marabou assumed an air of disconsolate resignation, his wrinkled head receded still farther into his white collar band, his plumage became pitiably thin. He no longer left his perch excepting at night, when his enemy was sleeping.

Senegal, April, 1874.

Our new friends, the Tuaregs, have certainly taken us into their group and we have roamed

through enormous deserted parts of the country all day with them.

The burning wind that blew violently in the dunes covered us with sand; we advanced in a dazzling golden cloud. Our crazed camels, even more awkward than usual, stretched out their long necks and proceeded with a jerky trot.

The sand was everywhere—in our eyes, in all the folds of our clothes, in the hair of our animals.

We must have made a fine appearance in this landscape, with our voluminous dark burnooses partly covered with veils, in the Tuareg style, which blew in the wind and in our faces, sunburnt from the African sun.

In the evening, when our caravan passed through the village of Touroukambé, the negroes, who considered the Tuaregs holy men, placed themselves on the road in front of us with fearsome respect. They kissed our hands and asked us for amulets.

On board the Espadon,
Senegal, May, 1874.

On May 25th I left the *Petrel*. The boat of honour was made ready for me, as is the custom when officers leave. Four ensigns boarded her and took me on board the *Archimède*, which

was to take me to Dakar, where I was to join my new ship, the *Espadon*.

The *Archimède* was an old African coast boat that had been hurriedly drawn into service after having rotted for several years in the river in Senegal. That day it was crowded with passengers—poor women who had followed their husbands to the colonies and were returning to France, sick. As usual, there was a great confusion of visits and farewells.

We left at five o'clock in the evening. The sun was setting; we sailed rapidly down the yellow stream. . . . As I passed by, I received the last signals of good-bye from my friends on the *Petrel*, and my heart bled at leaving all of them. . . . And behind us the mournful white village of Saint Louis, with its thin yellow palms and its sand, was disappearing. . . . I lost sight of this corner of Africa of which I had been so fond and where I had suffered so keenly.[1] . . .

It was a hard night at sea on this miserable boat—nothing to eat and much rolling. I was especially overcome by the emotions and events which had succeeded each other in such a few days in my life.

[1]Pierre Loti had destroyed a great many notes which he took in this period of his life.

At one o'clock, on the 26th of May, the *Archimède* anchored in the bay of Dakar, which I looked on again with joy.

I found several good friends on board the *Espadon*. But still this boat seemed depressing to me. It was a perfect type of the old Senegalian boats, with its black equipment. Crocodiles and all sorts of ridiculous stuffed or dried beasts, souvenirs of many voyages to Galam, hung in the ward room. After the violent emotions of the last few days at Saint Louis, the quiet on board was oppressive to me.

The room which was to be mine was not very attractive, especially when compared to the one on the *Petrel* which I had just left. It was a large old bare room; the floor, warped from weather and heat, was occupied by numerous families of cockroaches. A big porthole, about two inches above the green water, opened next to my bed, and during the enervating hours of the siesta I could see fish, including sharks, fight right near me, and little coloured boys in canoes.

During those times in my life when my heart is full of some vivid emotion, the smallest details of objects about me impress themselves on me, and time, which effaces everything else, seems to leave these impressions. . . .

And so this big room in the *Espadon* will stay for a long time in my memory.

On board the Espadon,
Dakar, June 20, 1874.

My first visit in Dakar was to the old mulatto woman, Marie-Félicité, who had rented us her house in the days of the *Petrel*.

She had again taken possession of this big house and was settled there with all her negresses and all her rags. But she told me that she had kept a little house at the end of the garden for me. This little house was about as big as a cabin on shipboard; it contained a very white bed with a mosquito net and a narrow native couch made of matting and bamboo for the siesta. I also found my hippopotamus head and giraffe skin which I had brought there from Podor.

This last month that I spent in Dakar will always seem one of the most wretched in my life. My beloved has gone back to France and my heart is filled with love for her and with remorse, confusion, and uncertainty.

My duties on board keep me occupied very little and I spend my days in going over our walks of other days, through sandy paths in the bitter solitudes of Cape Verde.

At night I roam through the black villages, dressed like the natives in a long white tunic.

It is June; the season of storms is near, the air is becoming filled with the scents of the tropical spring, and everywhere the thorn-apples are beginning to open wide their white calyxes.

My little house is surrounded with oleanders and exotic acacias in flower. At night the overpowering scent of all these perfumes puts me into a heavy sleep full of strange dreams.

Dakar, July, 1874.

Last night I was very frightened in my lonely house at the end of the old woman's garden.

There was a bamboula over at the leper women's quarters and I could hear the tom-tom and their songs in the distance.

I was in bed and nearly asleep when I realized that the noise was coming closer. . . . A vague fear kept me awake and this fear grew as the beatings of the drum and the hoarse voices became more distinct. . . .

When the crowd was not more than two steps away I suddenly remembered with terror that my door and my windows were wide open. But I had no time; these nightmarish dancers were

already upon my threshold and I was forced to be present at their revels.

For several moments, in the bright moonlight, dreadful swollen leprous bodies danced wildly before my eyes, stumps of hands covered with dreadful white scabs waved in the air, faces without noses and without lips came close to me with an expression of sinister gaiety, as in dreadful dreams. . . .

And then the tom-tom urged the lepers on farther and I was freed; but it seemed to me that for a long time I was conscious of the odour of death and everything that surrounded me seemed polluted. . . .

Dakar, July, 1874.

Yesterday I went to the spot at the foot of the big tree on the dunes to watch the departure of the *Petrel* which was taking my dear brother Jean to Saint Louis. The big tree on the dunes is an old friend—a friend of more than three years. It was the favourite goal of our walks when the *Vaudreuil* came to Senegal in 1871; we had adopted this rare isolated shade, this corner of the countryside.

And we followed it for a long time with our eyes when the coast of Africa was growing distant. . . . We were leaving for the South

Seas, happier than to-day, and younger. Everything was new and strange in our imaginations at that time; the sun seemed to shine more brightly and tropical nature seemed more beautiful. . . . We used to come to the foot of this tree in the mornings and at that hour it was covered with blue lizards, birds, and insects.

I can also remember a peculiar animal which lived in the neighbourhood and puzzled us greatly. . . . We never managed to catch it in spite of our snares.

We were three children still in our first enthusiasm over voyages and adventures, and the mysterious heart of this melancholy Africa often made us dream as we sat in the shade of this great tree, our eyes turned toward the interior and our minds questioning the huge extent of sand. . . .

But I am thinking less of you here, dear brother, than of Her, She who is an unknown memory to you. . . . It is to this spot, too, that I came to watch the fast ship, which was taking my beloved to France, pass by. . . . On that day a strong wind was blowing the giant tree above my head, and at my feet was raising enormous foamy waves in the sea on which Her ship was fleeing.

It was during the oppressiveness of midday.

The sun inflamed my brow and cruelly scorched my shoulders but I felt nothing, so lost were my thoughts. . . .

To-night I came here for the last time. I am leaving this country. . . . To-night there is the sadness of the twilight hours in this endless solitude. . . .

The huge sombre mass of this isolated tree rises before me. The darkness is descending to all the little hollows between the sand hillocks; it is beginning to reach the ridges on which a few rigid outlines of baobabs are fading out in the distance. And with the coming of darkness, unwholesome night mists and the scent of white thorn-apples rise, too, and my head is heavy. . . . The air becomes oppressive like a hot room in which too many flowers had been closed in too long.

Presently a large moon with an indefinite outline will rise in the mist; and then the nightly revels of the wild beasts will begin near by in the Dghioloff cemetery.

Time has no hold on such a desolate country. . . . Ten centuries ago, the old tree of the dunes already existed, and in ten more centuries its monstrous branches will doubtless have spread only a little farther. . . . But this unchanging and mournful desert no longer in-

terests me; my thoughts are all of our love, dear one. And where shall we, whose existence is counted merely by years, be in only ten years from now? . . .

Maybe we can steal a few hours, a few fleeting hours of love from the passing years, and then we must die. . . . A few more years and then we shall no longer be. . . . But the African thorn-apples will continue to bloom with their odour of belladonna and the great tree of the dunes will continue to raise its head above the evening mists. . . .

On board the Espadon,
At sea, July, 1874.

The day before the *Espadon* left for France the spahis gave a farewell lunch.

I have a happy memory of this luncheon, at which there was such good spirit of friendship between us and such sincere regret that we were leaving each other perhaps never to meet again. . . . We all, including the spahi lieutenant Brémont's big monkey, were seated on the white terrace.

It was a hot July morning; the sky was of a blue unknown even to Italy. We could see the whole town—square houses and Moorish terraces, which cut into this intense blue sky with

their dazzling whiteness, and here and there several motionless palm trees raised their yellow heads. The sun was nearly directly overhead, the heat was appalling.

After lunch, Brémont asked permission of the captain of the *Espadon* to introduce to him a spahi who, at the last moment, wanted to get passage to return to France.

This spahi was none other than J. Peyral;[1] he had an ease of manner and a smiling gaiety which I had never seen in him before.

There was a terrific tornado during our last night in the river and the *Espadon* was flooded.

By six o'clock the next morning—Sunday—the farewell visits began on board. As we were very well known, all the officers of the colony came. It was in the midst of this unprecedented confusion that Brémont brought and intrusted his protégé, J. Peyral, to us.

We left at nine o'clock in radiant weather. The blacks were crowded all along the big river to see us pass. Soon the old town of Saint Louis disappeared, this time for ever, from our horizon. . . . We no longer saw anything but the vast Sahara whose monotonous sands we would be following for a long time. . . .

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[1]The one in the "Roman d'un Spahi."

Annecy, October 28, 1874.

. . . After a lengthy controversy with an old lady and gentleman, I took my seat in the left-hand corner of the carriage. And the coach, harnessed in tandem as in days gone by, started off at a great pace.

In front of an old house, inhabited by blacksmiths, I said good-bye to an honest-faced old Savoy woman. Sitting on her front stoop, she watched me go with a discreet and mysterious air, as though she half guessed what was going on and wanted her neighbours to know that she had been taken into my confidence. On the other side of the street stood my poor friend Ermillet,[1] her son, with his gentle good face, who was not so timid.

He knew that I was on a sad mission and that something important to me was about to happen. . . .

It was the last of October and the season was advanced for Savoy; but this was a warm lovely day, and mountains, either reddening or crowned with dark evergreens, stood out against a limpid blue sky; the yellowing trees had already

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[1] An old sailor on the *Petrel*. Pierre Loti had come secretly to see the person whom he has mentioned, who had left Senegal before he did, It was his last interview with her.

covered the road with dead leaves; there was all the charm of the last beautiful days.

The travellers were requested to get out of the carriage going up the steep hills; everybody went together and there were little happenings reminiscent of the stories of M. Töppfer which would have seemed very amusing to me had I not had my heart wrung by so much anguish.

I gradually recognized all the places described by Ermillet in his primitive language, those which he had gone through once as a child when he was running away.

Night came on and the old coach kept on going, plunging into mountain roads, into deep dark valleys, every once in a while passing through ruined smugglers' villages, which took on fantastic aspects at this hour. . . .

It was now very cold and the night was misty; below us, in the valley, we could see the lights of a big city; and soon our horses' hoofs echoed on the pavement of a crowded street, where busy passers-by moved about in the fog. . . . . It was to this city that I, alone and a stranger, was coming to attempt a desperate venture; it seemed utterly melancholy to me.

I wandered about strange docks, asking the way to the hotel where there must be some letters awaiting me.

The hotel was crowded with Russians and English people, with tourists whose gaiety struck a false note in my ears. . . . I didn't touch the dinner that was served me.

About nine o'clock I left there, having asked the way.

It was a black night with a heavy fog, and I, just arrived from luminous Africa, felt dreadfully strange.

I walked for a long time through steep, deserted gloomy streets; finally I arrived at the house for which I was looking; it was an old aristocratic place with a coat of arms on the door.

I trembled like a child at this door. . . . There was no light, no life in this house where I had come to stake my life . . . I raised my hand to knock . . . I was as though dazed; I no longer breathed. . . .[1]

. . . We left slowly but when we got out on the open road, the coach went much faster.

It was about noon and the mountains of Savoy had a radiance which was unusual in this lovely autumn sky; like yesterday, it was one of those clear mild "Saint Martin's summer" days, those perfect days which are so full of charm because they are the last ones. . . . I was in the

[1]Several pages of the diary are missing here.

calm mood which follows violent emotions and which is heart weariness. . . .

We came to Annecy, which was bathed in sunlight; I was anxious to get back to it and to my friend whom I had left there. . . .

My poor friend worked all day in an iron factory, where he with difficulty made a living for his old mother and sister.

"It is all over and here I am," I said to him; "leave your work and come with me, I am afraid to be alone. . . ."

I stayed five more days in Annecy, five days in which my friend and I tramped through the mountains, and these few days are a pleasant memory to me.

In the evenings, we would go out on the lake whose peaceful sad beauty was in complete harmony with my thoughts at that time. . . .

Joinville (*gymnastic school*), *January 25, 1875.*

This evening, at the end of a gloomy winter day, after the customary wretched dinner amid the noise and the careless voices, in the thick smoky atmosphere of the mess I was suddenly transported, in memory, to the great moving sea, to the air of the tropics; I saw as in a dream the old *Espadon* beaten about by the waves of

the trade winds, and all the impressions of those days, already so far away and forgotten, were brought before me in all the striking clarity of reality.

It was on that August night, when I flew down the gangway, to tell the commandant: "Ténériffe is in sight from the port side." I was then second lieutenant on the *Espadon*, a small broken-down old boat which was returning from Senegal; but we on board were all fond of each other—all my men liked me and I missed them all when I had to leave them.

Berny, big François Berny, the helmsman, who was somewhat my favourite, opened his eyes wide but could not yet see anything.

"It's true," our good captain said, after he had verified it with his telescope, "you certainly have good eyes, Lieutenant."

And the good news spread rapidly down to the bottom of the hold: "The lieutenant has sighted land, Ténériffe, over port side!"

For the last two weeks we had been uncertain, we had had constant bad weather and our old tub was full of water. We were all exhausted, wet, and a little discouraged.

It is a curious sensation for a group of friends such as we were to be on the open sea on something so small and unsteady, but the impressions

one receives under such circumstances can be understood only by sailors.

The damp trade winds were driving the little clouds rapidly above our heads that evening —a sign of bad weather in the tropics—the sun had just disappeared, the night was cold and the sea running high; we were covered with spray. . . . My eyes had been looking for land for a long time in the direction indicated by my day's calculations. . . Above a distant line of vague mist, in the still light sky, one could barely see a tall outline which required the eyes of a sailor to grasp. I had recognized this indefinite outline as Ténériffe, that silhouette which had struck me three years before when I was making my first voyage around the world.

The wind which was enveloping us in its salt dampness was getting more and more cold and the sea was becoming rougher as night approached, but joy had come back and the sailors were singing. We were right near land, the land of Ténériffe; we had reached the uncertain goal of our crossing and were finished with our worries. . . .

The captain and I, delighted, went into the chart room to ascertain the exact position of our ship, in spite of the motion.

These memories of the *Espadon* occupy, with

so many others, a place by themselves. . . . Always danger, high winds, rough sea, the uncertainty of to-morrow, and with it all, the consciousness of a duty accomplished . . . constant responsibility and the absolute necessity of calling forth all the resources of my brain and my knowledge for the safety of all. I was fulfilling all my painful sailor's duties, with my heart overflowing with emotion while my own life was in the throes of unbelievable happenings. . . .

But the charm of this dream quickly left and I came heavily to myself, to become conscious of the smoky mess room, the discomfort of winter, and the noise of stupid conversations. . . . My memory grew confused, I could hardly remember further. . . .

Nevertheless I remembered that on leaving the chart room I went down the dark spardeck to my room, the only one on the ship in which a lamp was still burning. In the midst of the general confusion this room had been spared . . . it had an air of insolent well-being amid all the discomfort. . . .

When the portière was drawn, one was in a sort of exotic sanctuary rich in colours; weapons, necklaces, brilliant trophies, mother-of-pearl roses, and wings of tropical birds were everywhere.

. . . I had brought all this luxury because She was to see it. . . .

I found the man in the red vest, Cora's spahi,[1] seated on my low bed, which was covered with a white spread.

He sadly lifted his handsome head as I entered: "Is it true, Lieutenant," he said, "that you have sighted land? . . . Too bad, I wanted never to arrive. . . ."

Joinville, February 1, 1875.

Five months ago to-day I returned to France. . . . It was a beautiful warm day, a Sunday in summer. The *Espadon* sailed up the Charente after a forty-day crossing which was a terrible period in my life. . . We left Saint Louis in Senegal on the 20th of July. . . .

Five months already! How time flies! It outruns and wipes out memory. . . . Maybe my bitter sorrow will also disappear with the years, in spite of my desire to keep that at least; for I love that sorrow which is still something of Her, which is all of me that is living, more than the oblivion which time can bring me.

My life is pale and colourless; the drama is over and I am alone, exhausted, waiting, with the calm of death, for the final dreadful punishment.

[1] Jean Peyral, from the "Roman d'un spahi."

The year of 1874 passed through my life like a hurricane, it destroyed everything and took all with it, so much so that it seems to me I had not lived until then and that now I no longer live. . . .

And now, in the calm emptiness of my life, thinking of this agitated time when I loved so, it seems like a dream. . . . How great a passion was in and about me then, how much in consistency and how much love! . . . I lived in a whirlwind of fever and intoxication; it was a wretched entanglement; in which Africa's hot sun, with its tropical breezes, its mournful and imposing surroundings of solitude and sand, played its part with our youth. . . .

But it was life, while now I am dead. . . . I remember it only as a dead person would remember life: it is that which I feel when I look behind me.

Alas, the date of my return, September 1st, already five months, good God! . . . And it is nearly three months since for the last time I touched the hand of my best-beloved who ruined my life—in Savoy, one October night, a dark and foggy night, when our meeting was short, sombre, and mysterious like a meeting of criminals . . . and then it was over for always. . . .

It is She, I think, who is responsible for the charm which still remains with me at the remembrance of the past year, of all of that sad African country and of my old ship down there. . . .

Alas, these memories are already leaving me: I can feel it; everything is disappearing; every day I try to put the scraps down on paper: useless effort, I can't put it into words and when I read it over afterward, it means nothing; the cold, powerless written words don't recall anything to me. . . . Alas, when the years, when relentless time will have made an old man of me, when they will have lowered me in my grave, will nothing be left—not a trace, not a vestige of what I have felt so powerfully, of what had made my heart beat so fast when I was twenty-five? . . .

Five months ago to-day, one beautiful Sunday, the *Espadon* gently sailed up the channel of the old Charente and we all felt the peaceful happiness of home-coming. . . .

The night before, during a change of watch, I had heaved to for a big fishing bark which had called out to us as she passed: "You are too far north. Bear off or you will land in Brittany."

The sea was high; those green, choppy waves,

which are characteristic of our Bay of Biscay, were shaking us terribly.

After dinner, Bellegarde and I said: "Botz, dear Botz, we are going to have a bad night and our poor old boat is barely holding together; it would be very wise to drink this 'Malvoisie de Palmas' that we have left." And we drank the "Malvoisie."

Afterward I played five points of écarté with Botz for my yoloff tunic against the big white coat he had just bought from Cora's spahi. I can still see the two of us, who had suffered together like poor shipwrecked men, anxiously watching the play of the cards as though it were an affair of great importance. Bellegarde, at my back, confused me with his advice; the sailor, Delarue, kept score for Botz with pegs. The spahi kept score for me the same way, his sombre eyes always looking into mine. . . .

I had the king and had just won the coat when the watch announced the sighting of Rochebonne, the first view of France, and we all ran up on deck. . . .

Joinville, March 11, 1875.

I have been ill for a month and am still weak. . . . I was ill with grief. I didn't think that was possible. And the doctor was not deceived,

even though I always denied it. I had suffered much anguish in silence, I had been overcome with despair without shedding a tear, and then the reaction set in, sorrow shattered my body and put me in my bed where I learned to know physical suffering. My head ached unmercifully, I had constant fever and was a little delirious. My memories of the country of the sun had taken on a startling vividness and clearness, as though I had second sight; I ceaselessly saw the dunes of Dakar, the sand deserts and the country of Bobdiarah in my dreams. The long Joinville winter, with its isolation, its dark cold and its snow—all those depressing things to which I was unaccustomed—had also helped to bring me to such a pass.

My comrades, some second lieutenants, took care of me and visited me in rotation. My orderly spent his days, by the doctor's orders, in rubbing my whole body with Melissa water to revive me, and everyone thought I would pass away . . . without knowing why or how. . . .

However, one sunshiny day I got up and carefully dressed myself, with my legs barely supporting me, and in spite of all I dragged myself into the open country. From that day on I was saved.

I am beginning to feel better now and I go out whenever the sun is out.

I was not used to suffering. I had heretofore not known illness and such extreme weakness; these new sensations came as an unpleasant surprise to me.

Joinville, March 15, 1875.

A painful lassitude has held me in its grasp all day, giving me strange nightmares after an anxious sleepless night. . . .

. . . The heavy air is surcharged with pungent odours, the heat is enervating, the silence overpowering, the sea motionless as a pale blue mirror beneath the torrid sun, the intensity of light makes the sky fade. . . .

That bluish line over there is the Guinea coast —as far as one can see, there is the monotonous outline of virgin forests reflected in the warm water. . . . Where is my beloved? . . .

I came back all alone to this country to which I had come to follow you; you deserted me, I lost you. . . . There is a deep abyss between the past and the present. . . .

The matter was decided, I remained a sailor and I left. . . . But why am I all alone, why did you desert me? . . .

. . . The heavy air is filled with a coming storm, with strong scents. One breathes the

miasma of fever in the deep forests; it is this cursed coast, this country of endless silent forests.

Serpents sleep on hot poison plants, crocodiles doze in the hot unwholesome ooze. The vast sea is motionless beneath the torrid sky. . . .

The negroes are striking dull notes on the wooden tom-tom; one can also hear the groans of the sorcerer's shell horns; they are passing by in canoes; the paddlers, glistening with sweat, dip their paddles in the hot water, which ripples languidly like oil. . . .

. . . I can hear the plaintive song of the young black women. . . . And I can see some negroes sleeping in the sun among the roots of the big sacred trees. . . . And then I awake and my eyes fall on a bunch of Noël roses which are near me. . . . I am lying on a couch, in my room at Joinville. It is four o'clock in the afternoon; the dismal winter twilight penetrates through the curtains; my orderly is sitting at the corner of the fire.

It is the hour for the doctor's visit; he says I have no more fever but that I am still very weak. . . .

Joinville, March 20, 1875.

This morning I heard the news that my friend, Brémont, second lieutenant of the spahis, died

in Saint Louis in Senegal, following wounds received in the expedition against King Lal Dior. This news was still another blow. . . .

All day I walked all alone in the woods, with a terrible icy wind blowing. When I came home, I fell asleep, exhausted, in my chair in front of the fire.

I awoke after a long while, at the beginning of a dismal March night, penetrated with cold in spite of my coat and with a dead fire at my feet.

And this sad memory greeted my awakening: "Brémont is dead." And again my thoughts left the dull Joinville sky to go to the country of sunshine, where I had lived so much—in the midst of my friends there.

Brémont dead; he, too, lying in the cemetery at Sorr, he whom I had known so full of life, so wonderfully handsome and who, one night, at a spahi dinner, drank gaily: "To those who fell at Bobdiarah and Mecké!"

And still it was so he should have died; he was of the kind of men who have, in their curious existence, made Senegal their country, the desert their nation.

My friend Brémont had some debts at Saint Louis, and they had to sell his effects, his weapons, his monkey, and his dog to the mulatto women. . . . Thus do the spahis end. . . .

Joinville, March 21, 1875.

The magazine *The Nineteenth Century* announces that the expedition led by my old schoolmate of the Naval School, Brazza, ship's ensign and Roman prince, will leave on September 1st for Dakar, where the transport *Loiret* is awaiting it. The expedition is to sail up the big Ogooué River and from there explore Central Africa.

A year ago in Dakar Brazza told me of his bold plan and I was very much inclined to go with him; I promised to give him my big dog, Coura-Gaï, who had a special talent as a watch-dog for encampments.

To-day, in Joinville, snow and sleet. . . . Why didn't I go with my friend Brazza? Who will bring the strong African sun, even that of the Ogooué, back to me? . . .

Joinville, March 26, 1875.

I am trying to recover a taste for life and I am not succeeding. . . . One wearies of everything, even suffering, and mine is leaving me but nothing is replacing it, nothing but the feeling of emptiness and the enormous boredom of living. . . .

The dear image of her who left me is fading; I am making the best of the strange place I have

in the world and the sinister "Mane, Thecal, Phares!" no longer frightens me. . . .

Besides, my health is restored, my muscles are developing enormously as a result of much exercise, I feel full of vitality.

I have said farewell to my dismal existence, my cenobitic mode of living. I have opened my door wide to youth and life. And my room, solitary and quiet like that of a monk at first, echoes now every evening with the shouts of young women's laughter. I was a blank spot, a puzzle, in my friends' lives; now I am the opposite and am the leader of things. . . .

Gay bohemian life. When I was seventeen, it was going on about me in the Latin Quarter where I had come to study for the Naval School and I alone took no part in it; vague sadness, the need of luxury and refinement, drove me away then and I sought the love of an unhappy young girl, living luxuriously on the other side of the river.

What is the use of a mask of austerity? I now need all this noise and this foolishness, I can't bear to be alone! . . .

Those to whom I have opened my door ask only to enter. I was surrounded and entertained; because I had been depressed, mysterious, and dying, my return to youth and

life was celebrated. My sailor's life and my long voyages also exerted their influence on this group; there was rivalry as to who should be my friend, who my mistress.

I saw that my dear brother Jean was astonished at these companions and this unusual life; but he understood and said nothing; besides he knows that this is all only on the surface and that my exaggerated self-respect would never permit of my falling too low, so low as to indulge in vulgar debauchery.

But still, I am not forgetting my beloved. . . . I have not as yet the indifference that I want. . . . I want pleasure and I have death in my heart. Remorse, ruthless remorse, assails me during the night; I wring my hands in despair when I think of her whom I have lost for ever; I have dreadful nights followed by terrible awakenings.

. . . Oh, that agony of waking! . . . Why do I always have that strange enlightenment which makes this such a terrifying moment?

I am living in a big ugly house, opposite the station; this house is reserved for officers who, like me, are taking a course at the School of Gymnastics.

A second lieutenant of the 57th Regiment lives above me. Henriette, his mistress, comes there twice a week—beautiful, clever, with an impudent and noisy manner but always resplendent and never twice in the same costume; she often brings along a friend, Berthe, also dressed up but ugly, as a contrast to herself. . . .

An artillery officer lives on my right, but he doesn't belong to our set; his mistress is silent and, like him, keeps to herself. We only exchange bows. . . . Old Julie, our landlady; a cat and three dogs—Toutou, Toutoute, and Titine—on my left.

On the second floor, at the door to the left, lives Delguet, of the 30th Regiment. He is one of the "Golos" (this word, which means "monkey" in yoloff, is used by us to designate those who belong to our group). He has brought his mistress, a sweet good little working girl, from Annecy, where his regiment is; she is "La Fratine"; we gave her the name of an old clothes woman from Annecy, whose story she had once told us. She is seventeen, she is kindly, refined, and as naïve as a child.

The Delguet-Fratines are the poorest but the most charming in the set.

La Fratine, who was very shy and rather frightened at first, has come to look upon me as

her best friend and my room as her room. Having become her confidant, I am capable of appreciating her fine qualities.

She works every day in Paris with very ugly people to whom I had to be very pleasant several times on her account. (They manufacture neckties for the Louvre.)

La Fratine arrives by the seven o'clock train every evening all eagerness, bringing with her a pile of work for the evening—work which we always keep her from touching. Delguet and I watch her come from my window. We know all the travellers who come on that seven o'clock train and have often made up tales about them.

Our little friend goes to her room or to mine and, to economize, eats Delguet's dinner and he goes without.

La Fratine has only one best dress, as Mimi Pinson used to have; she puts it on on Sundays when she goes walking with us in the Vincennes woods; but as the dress is of linen, we don't go out when it rains. I am always consulted about the hats and dresses for travelling and working, which are made in my room while our little friend tells us, with the most surprising innocence, the gossip of the workshop.

A fourth second lieutenant of the 30th, a sort of drum major, keeps house on the same floor

with Delguet, at the door on the right, with his "society lady," the large Liline, who always arrives very mysteriously. Still Liline once came down and had dinner in my room; but we keep our distance.

Julie's house has another stairway. On the first floor there, in the door on the left, lives Rayer, a ship's ensign, my great friend (the terrible one who once killed a man in a sword duel). We share a servant and our money, too.

Then come the two cavalry officers' rooms. The first one, who is horrid sometimes, has little Maria, saleslady at the Louvre (novelty department, pin counter), as his mistress—pretty, very young, with a slightly exaggerated air of naïvete, but very attractive.

The second one, who has an even worse disposition than the first, is as good as gold nevertheless; after he loses his temper he begs your pardon and embraces you with tears. Louise, his mistress, is a good girl, a milliner, in the Rue Molière in Paris. (She makes a funny little face which she calls "Happy Golo." That is about all she knows how to do.)

An officer of the 3rd Marine Infantry, an old Senegalian and a charming fellow, lives in the house across the street. He commanded for

four years at Grand Bassam, on the Guinea coast, and it was he who introduced yoloff as slang for the gang. His mistress, big Victoria, who is also a milliner in the Rue Molière, doesn't appear very often; her face would be pretty enough if she hadn't so many freckles.

Victoria's room in Paris is at my disposal for a dressing room.

The last one of the "Golos" lives farther away. He is a second lieutenant in the 19th Light Infantry; well bred, charming, but encumbered with Armandine, a saleslady in a collar store, whom we dislike.

Those of my neighbours who bother me the most are unquestionably Henriette and her affinity—Henriette, who pursues me with her flowers and her love, while her lover is perfectly unconscious of it. As soon as I appear on the balcony, I am the recipient of bouquets from above, bouquets of roses, bouquets of lilies-of-the-valley, and sometimes of her herself, as she even manages to descend with the aid of sheets. When I close my door, she comes in through the window. One night, to my intense terror, she and Berthe came in that way; the fact that they were received with blows seemed not to hurt their feelings at all.

There is no use trying to go to sleep before

two o'clock on the nights that Henriette spends in Joinville. . . .

Joinville, April 10, 1875.

April has come back and has brought the spring; the weather is mild, the fields are full of flowers and the "Golo" gang is leading a gay life. No merrymaking in the outskirts of the town, no country dance occurs without us; we parade our boldness, our nerve, and our follies everywhere.

The well-kept surroundings of Paris begin to weary one with their life and flowers. On nice days a veritable whirlwind of Parisians out on picnics arrives in Joinville; bargemen, working girls, and shopkeepers—this whole crowd sings, dances around, and picks the flowers.

The Vincennes train empties a whole flood of them twice every hour under my window.

We stay out late on our porches on these lovely spring evenings; Delguet, his companion, and I are always the last ones. And then La Fratine, with her cunning intense manner, asks me innumerable questions about the heavens, the planets, about exotic countries—eager to learn and understanding everything so well.

Joinville, April 30, 1875.

The "Golo" gang has joined forces with the gymnastic instructors, sergeants or quartermas-

ters, nice loyal fellows, with frank open faces, who are full of irresponsible joy and youth.

Every night we meet at the "Lapin Sauté," a soldiers' eating house which is in a garden that smells so deliciously of syringas and roses. The tribe gathers in my quarters; we mix up and interchange clothes, with the result that new sergeants and sailors appear, as well as rag pickers, absurd toughs, circus clowns and acrobats, all kinds of ridiculous and impossible-looking people.

We rule everywhere and are feared because of our skill in boxing and of the Herculean strength of our athletic teachers.

Our rallying song is a lively tune which sounds gay in the evening, when the instructors sing it as they cross the flowering fields which lead to the fort. . . .

A "game of the four corners," an invention of mine, is especially popular. Big groups start on Sundays from at least twelve spots. But, to do it properly, we choose a territory already occupied by numerous storekeepers and their families for their picnic lunch; these parties end up by being quite rough and most amusing.

Every Sunday evening there is the ridiculous sight of Parisian picnickers running to catch the last train so that they will not have to spend the

night in Joinville; we have a vantage point on our balcony from which we can make fun of them. We even amuse ourselves by throwing the remains of our dinner (asparagus ends, eggshells, etc.) at the most belated of the travellers. These people often get angry and turn about and shake their fists at us, divided between the desire to get revenge and their fear of missing the train; then they begin to run much faster, which doubles our joy.

To his friend Delguet.

Annecy, June 23, 1875.

DEAR FRIEND:

First and foremost, pardon the gray colour of the paper; it is hotel paper and, anyhow, it is about the colour of my thoughts.

I have been in Annecy since this morning, in a ceaseless rain, and I find no charm in this country which seemed so lovely to me last year, in cloudless weather . . . and then, too, it recalls too many vivid memories.

I had had a hard blow when I was here last year, but I was still full of life—I mean mental —while to-day I feel dead.

You know how lugubrious Annecy is in the rain. I paid my friend Ermillet a surprise visit

in his iron factory. I found him looking so wretched, so changed by illness, that I hardly knew him: I must admit I did not enjoy seeing him, formerly such a handsome sailor, looking like that. But at heart he is the same as always and I love him dearly.

Thank you for wanting to know him on my account; but I think it is impossible as my poor friend has a very rough exterior and you would soon tire of it.

I received your sad little note when I arrived here; my affairs are going sadly, too. I have to go back to X——,[1] where I have no doubt I shall receive a cruel disappointment. . . . I haven't a cent, but you know that that won't stop me, and once there, I shall have to return and will manage somehow. . . .

Annecy, June 30, 1875.

It is a delicious summer morning, and the three of us are walking along the shore of the lake at Annecy; the water below us is calm and blue and the tall mountains stretch out their reflections. It is the bank about which Töpfer wrote: "It is a solitary, calm, shady, enchanting spot."

My companions on this walk were my faith-

[1] To try to see the same person of whom he spoke before (the one from Senegal).

ful friend Ermillet and little Fratine, who had just recently returned to this part of the country; she still wore the same dress and little hat made in Joinville with the help of my advice; she trotted along, half gay and half ready to cry, and a little embarrassed at being alone with the two of us.

It seems that she had wanted to take this walk for a long time and the weather seemed just made for her; insects buzzed gaily about and masses of flowers, campanulas and pink bindweed, carpeted the mountain. . . . But I guessed what was going on in my little friend's heart and it worried me; in order to distract her I tried to talk about Delguet, who adored her and was coming back soon. . . . But her thoughts were elsewhere and she didn't hear me. . . .

The next night I asked Ermillet to help me find her home, as I did not want to leave Annecy without saying good-bye to her. And we searched from door to door all evening. A dark-looking inn, in the old quarter near the barracks, was the residence of Fratine's mother—an indescribable den full of drunken soldiers and suspicious characters. Away back in the corner of a smoky room we found poor Fratine, ashamed and unhappy; her superiority, her modest ap-

pearance, and her Parisian clothes contrasted strangely with this wretched place; in her mother's tavern she looked like a daisy in a rubbish heap.

We were dressed like workmen. She turned all colours when she saw us and was afraid to come forward or to raise her eyes. . . .

"Will you spend the day with us to-morrow at Sévrier?" I said to her. "We have Delguet's permission and my friend here will call for you. . . ."

In spite of the shade afforded by the oaks and chestnut trees, the sun was hot when we arrived at Sévrier; we spent a pleasant day there, with all outward appearance of perfect happiness. We took our meal in a cottage which belonged to good peasants of Savoy; and then we walked about the mountain. . . .

Our return was sadder. Fratine held on to my arm, she trembled at times, and her tears were near the surface. . . .

"Shall I ever see you again, Loti?" she asked me.

"I don't think so."

We kept on walking to the corner of the road that she had to take in order to return to her tavern unperceived.

"I will say good-bye to you here, Fratine. . . .

I saw that she slowly let herself sink down. . . . We led her to a stone, I kissed her, and we left. . . .

After we left, my friend and I, we watched her for a long time; she sat in the same place and at intervals her breast heaved as though she were sobbing. . . . Then a curtain of trees came between her and us. . . .

Rochefort, January, 1876.

I well deserve the criticisms for my racket at night, but I am in such need of distraction! In Joinville, my life was too full for me to think, I even managed to forget my sorrows; but here, in this old house of mine, where everything recalls the past, the terrible reality has appeared before me, I am seized with a mortal anguish, and I realize that my existence is irremediably broken.

How I sighed for my old house at Rochefort when I was far away! Now its quiet oppresses and I would leave it never to return were it not for my dear mother.

I no longer paint or play; if, at some time in my life, I saw gleams, believed myself an artist, that is all wiped out now and to-day,

more than ever, I feel my inability to seize the ideal which I still sometimes glimpse. . . . And so I have begun to pass my evenings at the inns. . . .

It is less bad than one would think; the companions of my choice have, it is true, followed all trades and sailed under all flags, but they have never stolen nor killed any one; they are even good steady sailors with a real foundation of honesty and good-heartedness. I hold this handful of men and they are ready to follow me into the fire.

I must admit that sometimes there is fighting and damage done, but our blows never fall excepting on those who deserve them.

Since Jean is no longer friendly with me, I have the same sinister dream every night: I dream that he is dead. The dream always takes place in Magellan; probably because it is the corner of the world in which we were the most unhappy and where we loved each other the most. . . .

I dream that they find him dead on the ground, among the mosses, away in the dismal silent forests through which we have so often wandered. . . .

And this happens every night, at the same time, with a fatal regularity. . . .

Toulon, March, 1876.

My sailing orders arrived at Rochefort one Sunday in January; I found them at the house one evening when I came back from Royan, where I had gone to say good-bye to Uncle Gustave. Mama and Aunt Claire, who were in the sitting room, gave them to me.

I had taken a walk in Royan with my poor old uncle; the lovely winter sun, the blue sea, the clear sky had imbued me with courage and I began to realize that everything was not all over with me, I felt a renewed interest in life.

I will remember those last days in January for a long while; my suffering was gradually fading away and I had only the impression of a strange awakening, an impression of emptiness and light-headedness.

These winter days were lovely. Dry, cold weather. My sister was home and everybody spoiled me as best he knew how; they brought me flowers, Noël roses from Fontbruant. It was the magic of winter, the magic of one's family, the magic of home. Madame Besnard, my good neighbour, had never before shown me such friendship; she showered me with excellent wine and even with candies. They made fun of me

sometimes for eating and drinking so much and I had to laugh myself; it seemed to me that I was recovering from a long illness.

I had to hurry with my preparations for leaving, as my sailing orders were imminent.

My friends came often to visit me; my sailor friends, too; all of them were, like me, about to sail and the whole troupe was soon to scatter on the seas.

Finally the trunks left and on a beautiful evening I left for Toulon.

Here in this brisk Mediterranean air and bright southern sky I found a host of friends who undertook to distract me. I really began to live again. . . .

I even allowed myself to join a group called the "lyric group," under the leadership of an old naval lady. We gave concerts for the poor in neighbouring cities, and sometimes we were given champagne suppers by the grateful municipalities.

This gay crowd, headed by the old lady and her daughter, generally moved about in two buses, playing childish games.

But I formed a friendship with some clowns, and my leisure was much occupied with a circus.

To his friend Plumkett.

On board the Couronne,
Toulon, April 24, 1876.

DEAR FRIEND:

I, too, would have liked to throw myself at the feet of Christ; I would still give everything in the world to have, for one instant, that admirable illusion of believers and then die with their perfect faith. . . . But that is denied me and therefore I am doing gymnastics. I can assure you the cure is excellent; try it. Every day I go to the circus, with clowns and lovely young ladies who jump through paper hoops; I am learning to make jokes, to stand up on a horse, and to jump through rings. . . .

On board ship I furnished my room in the style of the beginning of the last century. The walls are covered with large flowered red silk, a heavy 17th-century embroidered spread covers my bed; there are old mirrors with wonderful gold pediments, weapons, and old faïence vases which are always full of roses.

This old room, at the bottom of the *Couronne*, near the powder magazine, is a stuffy retreat; but I don't mind its darkness, which gives a rich, mysterious aspect to the objects around me; I find the environment good.

One day when I hadn't a cent in my pocket I went out and gambled; all this luxury is the result of a lucky night.

No Date.

My dear Plumkett:

The places you mention, Bicêtre or Charenton, offer only comparative comfort and insufficient diversion to their boarders. Now, the Lunatic Asylum at Halifax (Nova Scotia), which is situated pleasantly in the midst of cheerful green hills, provides, on the contrary, a very English comfort and an incomparable routine. Six years ago, I made a solemn agreement to spend my declining years at the Lunatic Asylum with my colleague A——J——. Wait there for us, my dear friend; I am taking the liberty of telling you about this establishment and of recommending it very specially.

To Madame d'A——

On board the Couronne,
Toulon, April, 1876.

Dear Madame:

To-morrow I shall appear at the Etruscan Circus as a masked clown, in yellow and green tights. I expect to do nothing remarkable and

to be very frightened in my new rôle. But I promised to let your daughter know and you kindly authorized me to employ you as an intermediary.

Be good enough, madame, to keep this adventure a secret.

Sincerely yours
PIERRE LOTI.

The performance will begin at half-past seven. The best seats are in the boxes on the left, facing the "actors'" entrance.

On board the Couronne,
Toulon, April, 1876.

My room is full to-night of huge set bouquets, as large as the cakes of Brittany, which are giving off an exquisite odour. They are the ones that were thrown to me last night, together with some oranges and quantities of little pasteboard cats at the circus where I was playing a clown and performing tricks and several kinds of perilous jumps before an enthusiastic audience.

Several friends who were in the secret attended the performance to make it a success for me. Several society women who had come to clap for me were very much surprised to be sitting alongside others who were not "in society" and who were also throwing me flowers. There were

amusing meetings and I laughed heartily, behind the scenes, with the riders—with my friend Pasqualine, called "North Star, unequalled in a bareback somersault."

Such a début gives one a curious feeling. I arrived to light the lamps at seven o'clock.

"Monsieur," I said to the manager, "I feel myself weakening."

"But you are advertised on the billboards," answered this person, who has considered me as part of the family for two months.

The performance commenced with a wild animal act, performed while riding bareback by Madame Hortensia. The seats are getting terribly full; here come my guests, here is the "lyric group" and naval friends with their wives and followers, and questionable women in elegant clothes. Flowers and other big things are hidden under their coats, and I also see whistles, tin cans, and all the necessary paraphernalia to make a terrible racket, if necessary.

On coming in, the old leader of the "lyric group" made a slight grimace, but she got over it and began to laugh heartily; her daughter is the only one in the audience who embarrasses me somewhat, because she is charming and we are good friends. If I do not well, it will be a ridiculous anticlimax. . . .

The wings are in a vast sort of hall, which used to be the machinery room of an old theatre—little dark corridors, ladders, trapdoors, scaffolding. The funny things that happen here are indescribable; the clowns of the company are clowns even behind the curtain and unbelievably humorous. . . .

An old stage-hand accuses lovely Pasqualine (sixteen years old), who is engaged to Massi, the rider, of being on intimate terms with me. A scene of jealousy, nerves, and fainting. . . . Reconciliation, remorse, a cup of tea.

The young leading lady, very much disturbed, falls to the ground before the audience while making her somersault. Many catastrophes follow, etc.

It is time for me to dress. I am much upset. Here are my tights; they are yellow and green and come straight from Carolo Lorenzi in Milan, the tailor for all stylish acrobats. I don't know how to get into things like that. Two clowns solemnly put them on me. They are tight enough to burst, the last word in elegance. Then black velvet trunks, so scant that I shudder, wide lace sleeves, a big ruff, a green wig, a mask, a handful of flour, everything is complete.

My cousins (among circus people they call each other cousin) say that I look magnificent.

"Possibly a bit thin cousin?" I ask anxiously.

"Oh, but my dear sir, you are so well built, with such a fine chest and such straight shoulders; it is too bad that you are not one of us. . . ."

I look rather complacently at my body, which I had built up and transformed by exercise; my muscles, in the snug-fitting tights, stand out all over. This effect is increased by an old clown, who, absorbed in the tricks of his profession, touches up the hollows around my muscles with charcoal; this curious toilet lasts twenty minutes.

The manager came to fetch us.

"It is your turn, gentlemen," he said.

I am not shy, but this new rôle gave me a terrible feeling of fright. . . .

The music begins: a quick catchy air. I go on the stage. . . . Frantic applause. Three bows. Eight cousins rush upon me. My feet barely touch the ground; my muscles respond like springs: success is immediately assured.

Vaulting, dangerous jumps forward and backward, human pyramid, dizzy balancing, a combination performance arranged to show off my talents in the most dazzling manner. . . .

The real public, intrigued at first by the mys-

tery and the mask, was soon enthusiastic and applauded vigorously. It was a real triumph, and flowers, oranges, and toys rained down. Three calls, stamping of feet, lasting for fifteen minutes. The women riders also come out of their dressing rooms to shout; the affair is won by storm. . . .

The manager makes a speech while they undress me, a tragic speech declaimed like Camille's curse.

"Why did you come here, sir, what did you want with us? You are as proficient as we, who have nothing else. But when the performance is over we poor mountebanks will go and sleep in our wagons. What a dream it would be for me if I could go home to your ship in your place to-night, in your little silk-draped room in which you graciously received me, and wake up a marine officer to-morrow morning. . . ."

One of my shipmates and his friend Rose were waiting for me at midnight at the end of the performance. A porter followed us with my bouquets.

"My dear Rose," I said to her, "you are about as well fitted to your profession as I am for the bench or the Pope's throne."

Then the conversation became dismal and

here were the three of us engaged in the gaiety of a first-class funeral.

"Amen," concluded Rose.

"So be it," added the porter.

Toulon, April 10, 1876.

When my poor friend from Annecy heard that I was leaving for the Orient,[1] he wrote me a discouraged letter saying that he wanted to follow me at any cost and would ship as stoker. In the same mail there was an almost illegible letter from his mother, begging me to leave her son with her, and so I wrote to Ermillet not to come. It came hard, especially as the old Savoy woman asked me not to speak of her letter to her son, and maybe he thought I was deserting him. But an old woman's gratitude and blessings are enough reward for even a big sacrifice.

On board the Couronne,
Le Pirée, May, 1876.

Athens is an old Oriental city that I wanted to know. I managed to get that far with my friend the engineer; we could spend only one hour there, and that at night. During one of those bright Greek nights two horses took us

[1]The *Couronne* was sent to Salonica after the assassination of the French and German consuls.

through Athens at full speed; we rapidly recalled all our classic memories, and old monuments passed before us as in a dream for an hour: old marble temples, the Acropolis, the Parthenon. The gardens smelt very sweet of myrtle and oleanders. . . .

This steeplechase left us with a clear-cut and delicious impression which we would never have known had we seen Athens quietly in the daytime, like English tourists. . . .

From Pierre Loti's mother.

Rochefort, Monday, May 1, 1876.

Why, dear child, did you send me an itemized list of your expenses? (Even though I like to have you count.) I can assure you, I don't criticize any of them; I think even that there are very few young men thrown upon the world who have as few as you, and I never cease to regret that you have to bear such a heavy burden!

I can never help feeling a little anxious when you keep something from me; on the other hand, I so like to feel that you are frank and open with your sister and it seems such a good omen that you are again taking her into your confidence that I am far from complaining, I assure you,

at the private letters to her. But if you have new worries or some secret to tell your sister, I would seriously advise you to take good care of your correspondence. You have learnt, surely, to beware of indiscreet talk. And are you more careful of your little fund of money, too? . . . Be sure not to leave it lying about as you did here.

It is impossible, my dear son, for me to rejoice over your circus success. . . . I must admit, it is not the one that I dreamt of for you. . . .

Our April has been horrid and May is not beginning much better; it is still raining and it is cold to-day; nothing is growing quickly, everything is late. Something we have never seen before is that our poor starved sparrows have devoured all the buds of our glycines, which have been robbed of even all their leaves, but I hope that others will grow; those terrible little gluttons ate even a great many of our rosebuds, and they would all have gone the same way if we had not put a stop to it with a large white flag which waves over them—a flag with no seditious meaning.

Claire and I beg of you to tell us what you really want done with those giraffe skins which you brought from Senegal; they are almost

rotten and are not an ornament in the kitchen yard.

. . . Good-bye, dear love, all your poor old ladies kiss you very tenderly.

NADINE.[1]

On board the Couronne,
Salonica, May, 1876.

They were waiting for us in Salonica to be present at several executions demanded by the Occidental powers, as a result of the assassination of the French and German consuls.

That night I took a trip in a boat in a high sea, accompanied by a corpse tied up in a sack. Orders to throw it overboard without being seen by the Turks and to be back before daylight. I returned at four o'clock in the morning, with my boat full of water and I myself soaked and much upset by this expedition and this tête-à-tête.

On board the Couronne,
Salonica Roads, May, 1876.

The three days following the execution of the assassins of the French and German consuls are

[1]Nadine is the nickname for Renaudine, a name in Pierre Loti's family in memory of the Renaudine, ancestors who were obliged to emigrate to Holland after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Renaudine was also the name of a member of the same family who was the commander of the *Vengeur*.

days of waiting. The Roads are very busy, the insignia flying; admirals and commanders continue to exchange visits; several hundred cannon shots are fired every day, and this noisy demonstration is further complicated by the arrival of the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia.

Officers and crew are not allowed to land excepting on duty and armed; Salonica is seething and the new pasha is much disturbed. The bodies of the assassinated consuls are being kept with ice in chapels in the city and no one knows how to conduct the funerals, which threaten to bring about a general upheaval.

Finally, all precautions having been taken by the Turkish Government, the staff officers of all the ships in port were invited in the evening of the 19th to come to the funeral ceremonies the following morning.

On the 20th, at six o'clock, a number of boats brought the officers to land in full regalia; armed detachments of French, Prussian, English, Russian, Italian, and Austrian sailors landed; a huge crowd filled the docks, the streets, the windows, and the roofs. The funeral route is lined with a hedge of Turkish soldiers who prudently block all the cross streets. The silent mass, who seem dissatisfied, are held in check by force; but a trifle

would upset this false equilibrium and bring about incalculable trouble.

First we go for a memorial service to the chapel of the French Sisters, where the body of our consul is resting. Greek priests are on the left of the choir, naval chaplains the right. The admirals, the pasha, and the Mohammedan dignitaries occupy the front row of the gathering; a detachment of Prussian sailors is at the left of the coffin; opposite, to the right, a detachment of French sailors; with their bayonets set in their rifles, they are all friendly for the moment and watch each other with a curiosity in which good will is lacking.

Then the body is raised and carried by the men from the armed frigate, the *Gauloise*, through a long road to the dock where the boats of the fleet await it. The clergy, the staff officers, and a big crowd of officials stand by as it leaves and the ships in the Roads salute with several guns. It is taken on board the *Gauloise*, where it is to remain until the mail steamer sails for Marseilles.

Then the funeral procession marches back through the crooked little streets of the Jewish quarter. The French officers, who have up to now held the head of the procession, give way to the German officers; the sailors also interchange

places—the French go to the left, the Germans to the right—and everyone marches to the Greek chapel of the Lazarist Brothers.

Antique woodwork, carved and gilded, covers the rear of this chapel, on which are Byzantine paintings on gold; winged saints and branched candelabra hang from the ceiling.

The body of the German consul is exposed in an open coffin, resting on flowers; he has a crown of oleanders; his face is torn and mutilated.

He is surrounded by the popes who have long, dirty-looking beards but very elaborate cloaks embroidered in silk and gold; the archbishop especially has a dazzling costume. All of these solemn people hold lanterns or lighted candles at the end of staffs decorated with ribbons; they chant very lengthy litanies in a lively tune with nasal animation.

After the service the body is taken by the men from the *Medusa* (the Prussian sloop of war) and begins an interminable journey through the city with the popes and banners in the lead. It is a Greek custom thus to parade uncovered corpses through the streets, and the women are supposed to weep as they pass by.

The long procession marches for about an hour through impossible districts, through streets so narrow that sometimes one can hardly walk two

abreast. There are curious buildings everywhere, rickety terraces, grilled windows, overhanging balconies filled with an Oriental crowd splashed with bright colours. Roofs, trees, all the corners of the houses are filled to breaking with curious Turks, Jews, or Greeks; old men in turbans are perched even on the branches of the plane trees to annihilate us. All this mob would have to do would be to fall on our heads or only to close in on us. Twice there was a panic; the end of the procession was jostled by the onlookers; fighting and pushing followed; the sailors lowered their bayonets and we thought that that was the spark which would start the flame. But the danger was averted, thanks to the Sultan's police.

A command of the pasha, of which the following is a translation, was posted on the walls:

> "Article 1.—Any house from which any object of any kind should fall, even by accident, upon the procession, will immediately be razed and its occupants hanged.
>
> "Article 2.—Any person found in the crowd carrying a weapon will be hanged on the spot."

The body is put in the court of the Greek church. In the distance is heard a salvo of guns

from all the ships in the harbour, and the standards are lowered.

Then the cortège, breaking ranks, rejoins its boats and the pasha breathes again; the big performance is over, it has ended without accident.

On board the Couronne,
Salonica, May, 1876.

Sultan Mourad V has just ascended the throne and Salonica has been celebrating for three days. All the boats in the harbour are decorated with flags and are illuminated every night. As soon as it is dark, the Turkish ships all burn blue lights; they can always be distinguished by a large number of lanterns and many salutes of their guns.

All the minarets are crowned with fires on land, and long strings of lights are stretched along the wharfs where recently there were gallows.

There is a lot of noise in the city; there is mad singing in honour of Allah in all the mosques. The Turkish quarters are especially lively; the people are dressed in their brightest costumes, covered with gold lace, and the streets, as in our country fairs, are decorated with wreaths of flowers, lanterns, and a profusion of many-coloured candles.

To-day, the third day of the celebration, a corner of the bazaar caught fire at dawn; the little old dark streets, covered with planks, the old wooden houses burned like straw, and the Turkish merchants, driven out by the fire, piled their beautiful rugs, their narghilehs, all their precious Oriental wares pell-mell in the streets. When day broke, a whole quarter was on fire with great red flames and enormous columns of smoke.

The French and foreign ships quickly sent over their men and their fire apparatus; a band of Greeks, who had rushed over to plunder, had difficulty in getting away from the sailors, who beat them unmercifully. The latter climbed on the roofs and began to tear down with axes; they soon enclosed the fire and got it under control.

By ten o'clock there was nothing left but smouldering fires and smoke.

To-morrow, services for the French consul; services at the Greek church the following day for the German consul. Black-bordered notices, announcing the ceremonies, are posted in all corners of the city.[1]

[1]Most of this diary of the years 1876–1877 has already been published in "Aziyadé."

From Pierre Loti's sister.

Fontbruant, August 26, 1876.

BEST BELOVED BROTHER:

I hope that you will gradually become accustomed to your *Gladiateur* as you did to your cave in the *Couronne;* you know you almost always do so promptly. But one's surroundings have so much influence when one has imagination! Your Platonic disgust with the homeliness of your companion made me laugh at first, and then gave me much food for thought; I, too, have always been very much impressed by physical ugliness, which strangely fascinates me, and I consider it a blessing to be surrounded only by pretty faces; among all our loved ones, some are really beautiful and the others have a real depth of intelligence in brow and eyes, a lovely gaze into which one likes to plunge. . . .

But how greatly does ugliness retaliate when it is lighted by moral beauty! How wonderful have been the portraits of great masters when they have shown homeliness animated with genius, with inspiration, with goodness; it seems as though they had looked for it purposely, especially Titian, if my memory is good; and how grand and noble is the result!

And there is also heavenly beauty; the servants

of God diffuse a certain hidden and divine light which illumines their countenances; as for example Aunt Adèle and others like her. Could you imagine Aunt Adèle changed into a talkative and contrary old unbeliever?

And so I ask your mercy for those poor persons, "with dull looks and crocodile's eyes," about whom you write. . . . They will be charming some day when they are fond of you, but I guess I am interfering with my moral lecture. . . .

MARIE.

From Pierre Loti's mother.

Rochefort, Wednesday, October 20, 1876.

MY DEAR SON:

I have before me your letter which was blotted with ink by one of your neighbour's cats, you say, and that reminds me to speak to you of yours, of poor Moumoute whom I am sure you still like a little in spite of your apparent indifference. You must know that Moumoute, who is really a very beautiful and lovely cat, has become extremely good; it is now more than six months since she troubled us by having babies and she doesn't seem to have any desire to have any; and so she is gradually getting more and

more love from her good masters and she is often on your poor old aunt's lap, who is so fond of her that she has not the courage to drive her away, in spite of the fatigue caused by her weight and lack of manners. But I must say she is still a little sly and not very patient with her own kind; above all, she will not allow any of them in the yard and chases Madame Besnard's poor little cat all the way home, and is sent back in disgrace with much scolding. . . .

People ask for you a great deal, and I am nearly always asked what you say about matters in the Orient, what they think about them there . . . and I have nothing to say; couldn't you tell us something without compromising yourself?

And tell us something about your captain, about the officers on the *Gladiateur*. Do you live so entirely on shipboard that you have nothing to tell us?

My dear daughter is not coming very soon and Christmas this year will go by without my seeing either of you. . . . But whether you are here or away, my dear children, I can pray for you and that is my consolation.

My mother's heart kisses you, dear son.

NADINE.

From Pierre Loti's sister.

Fontbruant, March 27, 1877.

DEAR LITTLE BROTHER:

I think of you every minute of the day. I am sharing your sorrows; I know and understand what you must be suffering; I have often shed tears over the story of Aziyadé, because I imagine it is true in all details; the poor child is not responsible for her faults, but you are, and you lack courage. . . . And so you naturally have recourse to the Turkish theory of fate. . . . There is surely something fatal in the things that happen; but we should be capable of modifying them and of avoiding temptations.

. . . A pure life, the indisputable Christian doctrine always rises above all that. God's grace illuminates and purifies everything; it also keeps one from despairing of all that is good and noble and great. . . . May the good Lord guide you, dear little brother; lately, you seem to have turned toward Him at times. You will look to Him still more. . . . Good-bye and a thousand kisses.

MARIE.

Rochefort, November, 1877.

. . . It was on a February evening in 1877, in the Sultan-Selim Street, on the heights of Stamboul. . . .

An icy wind blew in gusts over the Ottoman country; it rattled the iron gratings, it shook the old worm-eaten houses, it bent the bare branches above the gravestones.

The street was narrow and deserted, bordered with antique Moorish columns of a forgotten style, a long succession of deformed and time-ravaged arches, under which were low mysterious little doors. All these houses had only one floor, which made this dismal old street look like ancient Bagdad.

Two men, crouched on rugs behind the leaded window of a Turkish café—a sort of cave which was especially popular with the dervishes—were finishing their narghilehs. After having said good-night to the company, which was gravely acknowledged, the two young men arose and went out into the deserted street. Struck by the cold, they buttoned up their serge jackets, which were mottled with black ornaments.

They were dressed alike: brown braided trousers, which were held at the knees with bands of bright silk; red embroidered belts, orange silk

shirts; thin white turbans were wound around their fezes.

They were all that was young in this decrepit and mysterious district. Night was coming on, the cold was dry and sharp, the wind was whistling lugubriously, and the yellow dusk was fading in the sky.

These two young men were talking together in the tongue of Tchengia-Khan. Suddenly they began to laugh and their laughter was so noisy and so violent that two old Turks who were passing, all wrapped up in their green cloth capes, hidden under their turbans and old-fashioned spectacles, turned around, greatly shocked.

As a matter of fact, such laughter sounded a strange note in the midst of these funereal surroundings. But as the costumes of these boys showed them to be high-caste Mohammedans, the old men gave them a look of sympathetic good will and muttered *Tchoudjouk!* (children!) in their beards.

After which they entered the doorway of one of Selim-le-Tigre's viziers and the two young men laughed still more.

These two young men were Achmet —— and I . . . Achmet laughed so heartily that he was forced to lean against a wall; he laughed so, he couldn't walk. . . .

We had both been so amused by a play on words which I had just involuntarily made in Turkish and which I did not understand until after a bit. This joke was very mild, I must admit, but we didn't need much to amuse us then, and Achmet told his sister of it that very evening. . . .

We have often laughed over it since then, and little Alemshah never greeted me without reminding me of my pun.

And right now, at the foot of the Balkans, under Russian fire, Achmet must still laugh over it, if he thinks of it.

Rochefort, November, 1877.

I am in Rochefort and the weather is bad; but fortunately the affections of my childhood are still very real to me. I adore my mother, for whom I have sacrificed my Oriental life and who will probably never suspect it.

I have furnished my room in approximately Turkish style, with cushions of Asiatic silk and such ornaments as the fire in my Eyoub house and the Jewish usurers have left me, and it faintly recalls the little room away over there, draped in blue silk and perfumed with attar of roses.

I am in my room a great deal and those are

hours of peace in my life; I dream of Stamboul and the beautiful limpid green eyes of my dear little Aziyadé while I smoke my narghileh.

There is no one to whom I can speak the Turkish language and I am slowly beginning to forget it. . . .

Lorient, November, 1877.

There are certain periods of weariness in one's life that one limps across, with Dame Reality as a companion. I am in one of those periods now. I am living in the midst of troubles and disappointments since I returned to France.

I had planned to go to Paris and my journey is postponed indefinitely; I counted on enjoying the peace of family life, of my old home, of my childhood memories, and at Rochefort I have had nothing but a succession of military duties, sailings, and necessary expeditions to the harbour of the Island of Aix. I barely caught a glimpse of my dearly loved Fontbruant and Limoise woods, and I will doubtless be denied seeing them again for a long time. I have lost two of my good friends from the Naval School, and each has left a blank in my life. I also lost and buried in a little corner of the garden a black and white cat, whom I adored and who had been my travelling companion.

That is the synopsis of this autumn's happenings. Finally, all my efforts to return to Turkey resulted in my being sent to Lorient, where I am stuck in temporary lodgings.

Not a thing to do here. I spend my days in the woods from morning till night; I lie stretched out on the turf until night begins to fall.

I found out that my poor friend from Annecy had his hand crushed at his work a little while ago. I also learned, by accident, that the result of this was complete poverty for his old mother and himself. I tried in vain to obtain for him the indemnity which was his just due. What is the use of living in such a lawful and policed country as ours when one cannot even get justice?

I see nothing but depression on all sides. . . .

From Pierre Loti to his friend Plumkett.

On board the Tonnerre,
Lorient, January 5, 1878.

My dear Plumkett:

You have struck the wrong time: I was just about to write you to ask you to send me one of those long letters, such as I have sometimes received from you, letters which had the gift of diverting me and which I re-read with such

pleasure. I am incapable of doing what you ask of me, to take you out of your sad thoughts for a few moments, for the reason that I am in the same frame of mind as you are.

If I undertook to talk to you about the Orient and Stamboul, where I have left half of my life, and of what is going on there concerning her whom I love, I could fill many pages, but it would tire me horribly.

I am leading exactly the dull life here that you might suppose. I am alone and isolated for a whole long winter. I can no longer even spend my days in the woods, lying down on the flowered heath under the pale sky of Brittany, as I did in the last lovely days of autumn. . . .

It's over and now there are rain, fog, bare trees, all the sad winter of Brittany in a cold, forbidding "furnished room," where the long, bored hours go slowly by. . . .

Fortunately, I have found two fine companions. One is Yves Kermadec,[1] a quartermaster of my own age (which makes him quite an old sailor) with whom I sailed in days gone by. The other one is an old maid, hump-backed and rich, intelligent and refined, of uncertain age, who makes great pretense of youth; she is sentimental, but well balanced, honest, and

[1]The one in "Mon Frère Yves."

kind, with her little hump hidden by long flowing curls—all told, a very curious person.

I introduced my two friends, they are amused at knowing each other, and each one, in his own fashion, helps me to pass the time.

Of course, Yves is my favourite of the two. I prefer self-made men to the semi-education of my associates; I have already told you my opinions about that. And it is very entertaining to have a friend who accepts all your ideas with admiration and considers you a genius, an opinion which you do not share with him.

I incur great expenses during the first of the month with Yves; we eat chocolate and candies. Toward the 15th of the month, we indulge in more economical pleasures: ring door bells or slip pasteboard rats between the legs of passers-by on the street corners.

I am scribbling this to you during a watch on the deck of the *Tonnerre*, surrounded by the noise of calkers, drillers, riveters, etc.

All those little blows on iron make my paper jump and amuse me for the moment.

Let me know whether you have found a solution to your troubles, whether you are more or less unhappy, without details, of course, since we decided not to confide in each other. I would be very much tempted by your society and

"The Damnation of Faust" to which you invited me; but I haven't the pennies necessary to take a trip to Paris.

I feel a sincere friendship toward you; in spite of my theories, I feel utterly sympathetic with you, I have a real germ of affection.

On board the Tonnerre,
Lorient, January 15, 1878.

. . . Every evening, in the darkness of the winter nights, I cross the Lorient channel in the steam launch driven by Yves; we go the whole length of the harbour between the melancholy jetties; land on the deserted wharf and I walk toward my empty room; climb the smoky staircase; in passing call good evening to my landlady and her daughter, who are hugging the hearth and here I am alone in my room.

The wind blows in under the door and the fire won't burn.

It is less dangerous than it was formerly, dear little Aziyadé, when we would go in the Stamboul nights to our lodgings in Eyoub, which no one will give back to us. . . . My heart is wrung with anguish when I think of you. . . .

My happiest nights are those when Yves is free and can be with me. Then we light a bright fire and talk of old times. In contact with me,

his intelligence awakens to many things, ideas, opinions which were hitherto unknown to him.

I tell him all about Stamboul and he listens interestedly.

Fortunately, my rooms are not wretched; I hate the looks of poverty—especially "furnished" poverty. My little sitting room, to which I rarely admit any one but Yves, is decorated in red velvet and is fresh looking and comfortable, and my nice old landlady keeps my vases filled with white and pink camellias, which are common in Brittany, but rare and precious elsewhere.

It was in my rooms that Yves sat in an armchair for the first time, and he found it very comfortable.

From V. L——.

Paris, January 30, 1878.

DEAR LOTI:

I have just finished reading your novel.[1] In reading those pages, which were so like you, I experienced a singular emotion; I pity you with my whole heart and, knowing you better, I am fonder of you, if that be possible.

I know you are indifferent to friendship that

[1]The manuscript of "Aziyadé."

is felt for you, and it does not surprise me after having known you so long. You rise to such great heights and your soul, which welcomes suffering, finds a strange joy in its isolation.

Those who, like myself, have given you an unlimited devotion, continue to live in the narrow and ordinary sphere in which they were born. Their joys are less keen and their sorrows are erased each day by their social duties whose commonplaceness does not disgust them. They were born with a less sensitive nature, and their more malleable spirit has never attempted to disentangle itself from the thousand and one ties which overrun their thoughts and prevent their souls from having the emotions which you know how to interpret so feelingly and so powerfully. How you must have suffered, dear friend, to have acquired all the inconsistencies that one notices in you! How you must have suffered to find every day in yourself the opposite of what others find! Your soul, which you think has grown old and incapable of strong emotions, has remained young, ardent, and still capable of great enthusiasms. You despair of life and you have found the only way to live: to have emotions and know how to share them. We who live a dull existence in which each hour brings some duty imposed by society, we who un-

hesitatingly perform this new duty every hour of our life, without thinking of giving one instant to what is best in us, in our heart or our imagination, we will end our stunted existence without having lived for a second. Our heart, our imagination, our feelings will all be rusted, shrivelled up, worn out without ever having served.

Believe me, my dear Loti, you have, in Turkey, had a beautiful dream such as you have, I think, had before; don't stop because of it. Don't believe in the permanence of your grief. Search for new emotions, and when you have quenched your thirst for the unknown you will accept the yoke of civilization and peacefully live the life of an oyster which is that of your associates.

Excuse this letter, which will seem stupid to you, Loti; I would do better not to send it to you, but I have no pride with you and I give you permission to smile as you read. I have always unreservedly accepted your superiority and I have had nothing but gratitude for the affection you have shown me for ten years.

I was almost jealous of the part Achmet had in your life, in your novel. Do you remember the first evening on board the *Borda* when I spoke to you? . . . I had addressed you and you had paid no attention to me, being preoccupied

with something else. I told De Jonquières how unpleasant it had been and he went to find you to introduce me to you. I don't know what attraction drew me toward you that day, but I was happy at your reception of me and I have given you the most complete devotion ever since.

You have often met just such affection, for you have a charm which attracts it. I do not know how to thank you for not having scorned the love which I offered and at every letter that I receive from you I feel that I am more and more devoted to you.

I took the liberty of sending Delguet your manuscript. He agreed with me that your work is destined to be a great success if it is managed properly.

Your friend
V. L.

Lorient, 1878.

. . . A dream last night, while the icy wind howled outside: I was in the garden in my house at Rochefort. But it was a sad deserted garden overgrown with weeds like a cemetery. I had a confused impression that it was happening in the far-distant future. . . .

It was at dusk, and the vines had the yellow

of autumn, and there was grass, grass between the stones. Two people were sitting on the bench: my grandmother, my great-aunt Lalie—both dead, ghosts—and I knew it. They said: "We are going up to our rooms to wait for Aunt Claire, who is returning from the Island of Oléron."

I was already going to bed in this sad twilight, and I had swung my hammock, like those of sailors on shipboard, in the wine room of my dilapidated old house, near the attic stairway. And I said to them: "I am afraid to stay here because it is a passageway and they will brush against me in passing." They answered: "In passing? And who will pass by, child, as we are the only ones in the house? You know that no one can come by way of the attic." But I knew that ghosts could come from anywhere, and this passageway frightened me.

I lay down, anyway, in the hammock and I watched them go into the garden, in the dismal twilight, over the dead leaves and the weeds grown out between the stones. Soon afterward I heard the voice of Aunt Claire talking to her cat, Moumoute, above me in the loft.—I knew that she, as well as the other two, was dead.—Soon she came down, touched me as she passed, smiled gently at me, and in order to reassure me said: "Oh, when I came back from the Island

of Oléron I first came *through the door*, but I wanted to see my cat and that is why I came straight up here; I am now going to join the other ladies." I did not answer, for I well knew that she was dead and did not have to go through doors to wander wherever it pleased her. And I watched her, in the ever-growing darkness of the dusk, following the direction taken by the others, walking on the weeds of the cemetery and the leaves which had covered our garden. . . .

On board the Tonnerre,
Lorient, February 3, 1878.

I was coming back from the cemetery, from the funeral of a young artillery officer who had killed himself because of unrequited love under the window of his beloved.

My friend d'Esquiyen, ship's ensign, with whom I had been talking for an hour, suddenly left me to hurry home through a short cut. "You see," he said to me, "they are waiting for me at home."

"They" were his young wife and blonde little girl who were waiting for him by the fire. . . . And I slowly went toward my empty room; the winter night was falling, a gray dusky mist permeated the city, and one by one the yellow

flames of the gas lamps were being lighted in this cold fog. The dock labourers were returning from work, tired and happy—they, too, were being waited for by "them."

Stamboul is very far away, my poor little Aziyadé, but the February night, dark and mysterious, is also closing down there on the harems, on the great temples of Islam, which, no doubt, will soon no longer exist. Dear little Aziyadé, I still love you with all my soul, with all my heart, as at the moment when I left you.

Perhaps the day will come when some one will be waiting for me, too, at home—some other one, an unknown whose existence I don't suspect, who is nothing to me as yet. . . . Maybe little children, too . . . and they won't be yours. . . .

Do you think I could love little children, when your blood will not mingle with mine in their veins? . . .

February, 1878.

First visit to the Trappist monastery. I had a singular sensation when I knocked for the first time at this little door of the Trappists, when I crossed the sill which was as sombre as the sill of death. . . .

I had been thinking about this refuge for the

despairing, about this supreme calm of monasteries, for a long while; I was in a way fascinated by the cold, dismal peace of this place in which all the noises of the world are stilled. . . .

Eternal silence—never a word exchanged between these mysterious monks; long cloisters in which the torments of Hell are painted in grotesque frescoes; tombs which slowly become deeper day by day under the cypresses, behind the gray walls; and everywhere under the arches is written the phrase of Solomon:

"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. . . . All is vanity and corroding of the spirit." . . .

This melancholy monastery, to which I will doubtless return, is twenty miles from the nearest village in a solitary corner surrounded by wooded hills. . . .

From Pierre Loti's sister.

Fontbruant, February, 1878.

DEAREST BROTHER:

For many days I have been asking myself whether I should write to you to pour out what is in my heart; I begin and then tear up letters; I am afraid of you, afraid of everything. But today I can no longer bear it! What are you going to do? If you go into that monastery, you

will never come out. With your exalted spirit, they will convince you and you will return fascinated!

I ask you on my knees, I beg of you, think well, not for my sake but for your mother. Wait at least until she is no longer here; it may not be very long, for I find her much weaker and strong emotions would kill her. She guesses vaguely what you are considering, without knowing as much as I do, and her faith is tortured by it. Don't you realize how horribly her Huguenot heart, her Christian pride, are suffering? You surely don't want to fill this poor dear mother's heart with anguish?

I am in constant torture in the midst of my loved ones, in my peaceful life, I who could be so happy with true happiness, and when I see the sorrow that you are causing your poor old mother, I suffer ten times more because of her.

I beg of you, have pity on us! You are human and know, at bottom, how to be good to all; won't you do anything to remove this sorrow from us?

What would it matter if we meant so little to you, what would it matter if it all led you to the truth, to happiness! But no, you are in torment, in anguish. . . . You can see how

afraid I am, and to console me you pitilessly fling all your cynicism at my head! Come to your senses, brother dearest, you are struggling in an abyss of moral misery!

What are you trying to find in this monastery? You know that it is not the truth; you will mortify your flesh only to emerge with more unbridled, more seething passions than ever.

Don't you know that there is just as much joy, intelligence, and greatness of soul in a quiet, peaceful, good life as in your wild and excited, romantic and tormented existence?

Poor dearie, always rocked by a mirage, a dream, a snare of the shadows! . . . In the beginning I sometimes followed you—it was still an ideal; I even understood Aziyadé and wept over her. But now, I no longer understand you, I see nothing in you but disgust and faithlessness, only your surrender to blank terrors.

I spend sleepless nights; I say to myself: "I'm through, I will no longer love him!" But it is at such moments that I want, above all, to take you in my arms.

Will you come to Fontbruant before you enter the monastery? Don't come from a sense of duty; I would not want to see you under such conditions. But if you come of your own free will to see your brothers, your poor brothers for

whom you used to find such tender names which were so sweet to them, then come and they will be as always toward the loved child for whom they waited with such joy in days gone by! . . .

MARIE.

From Pierre Loti to his mother.

Lorient, February, 1878.

MOTHER DEARIE:

I received a letter from my sister in which she said that that affair of the Trappist monastery had worried you greatly. If that were really so, I should be heart-broken. I thought you would take it for what it is: an unimportant temporary whim.

As far as my heart is concerned, I am still devoted to the Huguenot religion; you can set your mind at rest about that.

I kiss you tenderly.

La Trappe, February, 1878.

. . . I came to ask the hospitality of this strange place of exile one afternoon in winter. . . .

Rays of sunlight were on the woods, on the countryside, on the old monastery; nature was smiling sadly, it was peaceful and quiet. . . .

I was received with a brotherly welcome by these peculiar men, who pretend they no longer suffer and who have nevertheless suffered enough to understand me. . . .

The Superior of the monastery himself—still a young man in a white robe with a bishop's cross and purple cord on his breast—conducted me to the cell which had been assigned to me. He opened the window and pointed out the desolate view, the hills, trees, and a black old dungeon. Then he sat down with me and began to talk at length, with an extreme charm and gentleness. . . .

But I saw at once, only too clearly, the inanity of their methods to allay suffering even momentarily. . . .

. . . And then, this life here is too drab, even temporarily, for me, I who have not the beliefs which barely support the Trappists themselves. All day, all night, funeral chants which make one shudder; shapes from another world; processions of ghosts.

One cannot get even sleep, which is the universal consolation of the unhappy, here. . . . And the damp and icy cold, the black winter sky, the wind moaning mournfully, and hollow coughs that echo down the length of dismal corridors.

In the refectory of the monastery I share my meals with the priests who have sinned who have been sent to La Trappe to undergo a stage of their penance. A monk with a hollow voice, standing near our table, reads to us "The Contempt of One's Self," by Saint Bonaventure:

> "I said to putrefaction: you are my mother: and to the worms: you are my father and my brothers. . . .
>
> What were you, but impure seed? What will you be, but food for worms? What reason would ashes have for pride? . . .
>
> Plants, trees give off perfume, flowers, fruit; the body of man yields nothing but stench and filth. . . ."

La Trappe, February, 1878.

It was during the night Mass. The monks on their knees were chanting their eternal litanies. . . . I was in a sort of trance which was neither consciousness nor sleep; I followed their mournful song mechanically. . . . The strange spell of monasteries was already descending upon me like a cold shroud; a complete detachment from life came over me and the prospect of finishing my days in the rough serge no longer frightened me. . . .

Suddenly a memory, which seemed very distant, gave me a throb of anguish: my bright room at Fontbruant, which I might never see again, and the voice of the nightingales that one heard there in the spring.

And then, I went over my past with long and sombre reflection for hours in my cell. The memories of my childhood were the only ones that shone through the distance—they are the only really happy ones in my life. . . .

I would like to write about them, these memories of my childhood, before I die. . . . It seems to me that in writing them down I could slightly delay the fleeing of life, I could battle against the blind force which carries us into oblivion. . . .

From Pierre Loti to his sister.

La Trappe, February, 1878.

Dear Sister:

This sad place, against which you have such an antipathy, has at least this much in its favour: one can profoundly sound one's soul.

I did not enter the monastery for a mere whim, as you think, but I wanted a few days of peace. I have thought a great deal, I have even cried a little, which would have seemed ridiculous

anywhere but at La Trappe, but it has done me good.

I have told myself that my youth is going, that time is passing rapidly for all of us, and that the moments that we may spend together are growing less; we must therefore not lose them, if we find them precious.

Dear little sister, do you want us to have complete peace, the peace of the days gone by?

I deserve a little leniency, because I have had more temptations than most and I am suffering keenly; you know that my place in this world cannot be compared to yours nor to that of the people around you.

Do you want it all to end? Will you write me a kind letter without any ill feeling? It is a long time since I have had one like that.

I kiss you.

Lorient, February, 1878.

I left the monastery with a mad desire for noise, for activity, for freedom.

The woods were almost beautiful; I ran along the roads like a child, singing and jumping over the ditches. I gave myself over to the joy, at last, of smoking cigarettes and of drinking good cider in the country inns. . . .

On board the Tonnerre,
Lorient, February 8, 1878.

My friend Hassan writes to me: "In memory of our acquaintance made a year ago, on the rocks of Cape Sigri. . . ."

I remember that curious place, our last Turkish stop on the voyage, perfectly.

Hassan and I had been invited to the wedding of the Sheik's son, which lasted three days. A wedding which nearly turned to a tragedy on the last night, when a Greek in the middle of the celebration had come to say that the French, with the Russians as allies, wanted to take possession of Sigri.

This last exciting night was a glorious Oriental spring night; the brilliant full moon lit up the rocks of Mytilenus and the Mediterranean as far as one could see.

I can still see myself, running like mad, as fast as my legs could go, jumping from one stone to another, losing my turban, tearing my sash on all the bushes, and Hassan behind me, unable to keep up, shouting and puffing. It would have been very funny if the lives of several men had not been involved.

After twenty minutes of this frantic running I met a group of mountaineers, the whole popula-

tion of Sigri, who were also running and were carrying guns, yataghans, sticks, pitchforks, all the weapons that they had, in their hurry, been able to lay their hands on.

I made a speech in Turkish to all these people —and it was just in time: in front of us one could see a black mass coming over the rocks; it was French sailors from the *Gladiateur*.

After it was explained and the misunderstanding was cleared up, it all finished pleasantly and we went back to the village to the music of bagpipes while the sailors, without having fired a shot, reëmbarked in the bay of Aiguade.

On board the Tonnerre,
Lorient, March 2, 1878.

This is my position: I left Turkey swearing to return, and none of the efforts that I make to keep this promise are successful. During all of this, my poor Stamboul is being destroyed; the news from there grows worse; I can see that the Turks, in spite of all their courage, are losing the war, and I don't know what is going to happen to them all.

After dreaming that I was a Bey or a Pasha, I have slumped again into Occidental life, grayer and more tiresome than ever. My existence becomes more and more complicated by impossible

situations and I am very weary of everything about me.

At the beginning of this war I failed to take advantage of an opportunity to acquire a position in Turkey satisfactory to me, in accordance with my tastes which the Orient alone can satisfy, a position which will surely never present itself again. The opportunity is gone, doubtless never to return, and I let it go by instead of grabbing it by the hair. Now it would all have to be done over again; the powerful pashas, who would have used their influence, will no longer remember the young "giaour" in whom they had been interested for a moment. And then, if the Slavs win, if old Islam crumbles, my future prospects will be like Islam's and for the second time in my life I will see all my hopes, all my dreams of fortune and of love—all linked with the fate of Stamboul and the Prophet—fade away. . . .

From time to time I receive news from Aziyadé, little scribblings in Turkish, desperate little letters, more and more insistent, in which she begs me not to desert her. My last month in Stamboul had compromised her greatly and she, too, is in an intolerable position.

Achmet must have been killed in the war. That is one more worry and sorrow for me.

Now that I no longer have this devoted friend

as intermediary in Stamboul, I can't answer Aziyadé, and if I wait longer I will lose track of her and have no possible way of seeing her again.

Samuel has gone back to Salonica, where he is what he was before—a poor devil of a boatman, without a penny or a stitch.

Kédi bey, my cat from Eyoub, is the luckiest of the five of us and is now one of the cats in the mosque, a pet of the dervishes; he has acquired a sort of sacred quality which assures him of mice and bread for the rest of his days.

And the house there which had held all our happiness has long since burned down.

Since it is impossible for me to return to Turkey as a French officer, I shall become a Turk. I have no feeling for occidental Europe, where I have found nothing but disappointment; even before Islam had won me over so completely, I already wanted to leave, and then I was thinking of Polynesia, which had formerly charmed me so. I hate what is known conventionally as civilization and theories of equal rights. And so I will take refuge in the old Orient, far from steam engines, from social pettinesses, and from the commonplaces of progress. If I can't be of the nobility over there—very well, then, I will be one of the people, a "banabak"; but I will have my corner in the

sun and my share of the liberty which falls to the lot of the energetic in the countries where the laws are not made for everyone. . . .

Here, I am deeply and incurably weary; I believe in nothing sincerely. My life is wretchedly managed, and no matter from what angle I attack it I find myself surrounded by insurmountable difficulties.

Nothing amuses me any more; I can see nothing new or humorous that this world could give me.

Especially do I bitterly feel the misfortune of being without faith, and I would pay much, now, to have that of Islam.

To a friend in Constantinople.

On board the Tonnerre,
Lorient, March 8, 1878.

My dear Pogarritz.

You have always said that since I once saved your life, you belong to me a little. You also say that you would give me this life, which means so little to you, with pleasure. . . .

To-day I need you—are you ready? It concerns something very serious and I need you in my extremity. You are a good kind soul, and I come to you as to a brother. . . .

Above all, don't hesitate because it would be for my good, don't preach or remonstrate, it would all be useless, commonplace, unworthy of both you and me. You know what I want, I want it utterly and it cannot be changed. If you are ready to sacrifice yourself for me, do it unhesitatingly, with no holding back—and afterwards it will be life or death for the two of us. Will you?

It concerns that young Mohammedan woman whom you, smiling at my folly, call my "odalisque." . . . But don't laugh now; it is no longer a plain love episode, it is a supreme and terrible affair for her and for me.

Yesterday, the 7th of March, I received, by an unknown path, a letter from her, from my dearly beloved Aziyadé—I had told you her name; a letter of despair, a solemn appeal to all our past vows, to my pity, to my love for her.

The Russians are surrounding Constantinople; a general uprising, a sacred war, and the hurried defence of Stamboul are being organized; all the old men are joining the ranks, and her old master, Abeddin, who is a brave fanatic, will be in the front line; he will be one of the first to die. . . . She will be widowed.

You know well what happens to a beautiful young Mohammedan woman when she is a

widow: she is apportioned beforehand to some friend of the dead man who had desired her.

And for Aziyadé, Osman Effendi, whom you saw with me one day in Séraskérat at a Magyar reception, is the inevitable one. He is young, bold, and jealous, and he will not be killed because he is in the commissary department and will not fight. When Aziyadé becomes his wife, she will be as lost to me as though she were dead. . . .

And so she wants to flee at any cost; she knows that the confusion in Stamboul will help such a flight and that one can risk anything at such a time. But she has to leave Turkish territory as soon as possible and the poor little thing doesn't speak any Christian language, not even Greek; she has absolutely no knowledge of our customs, no idea of travel, of steamers, nor even of geography. . . . And so someone is needed.

My friend Achmet, whom you knew and who was so devoted and so full of initiative, can no longer be of service to her; he has left Stamboul and is doubtless dead now.

Several times this winter Achmet got some Greek, who murdered the French language and had no idea of our months or dates, to write to me. I know that he left for the war some time

around December or January, that he took part in the great killings in the Balkans, and that he came back promptly with a Red Cross ambulance convoy—wounded and sick. He spent part of the winter in Stamboul, bedridden and in great misery. . . . You remember his fortune consisted of two horses. One was requisitioned for the war, the other is dead.

On the 5th of last February I received a letter from him (dated the 22d of the same month), in which he asked me for a little money. He must have been in great distress to ask for aid and I sent him what I could.

On March 2d I received a last letter, written in Turkish this time by his friend, a certain Ali-Agha, a cavalry sergeant-major from Adrianople. He was again being sent to fight, but was hardly able to stand; he was wounded and dying and was sending me his farewell.

That is poor Achmet's story.

I myself could have gone to get Aziyadé. Yesterday I decided to; but I have reconsidered to-day. I have no means of getting a passport for Constantinople now or later; I have no money to go. . . . You may tell me that I could desert, that one can in a thousand ways travel without money; I know all that and yesterday I had determined to do it. But there is

my honour as a French soldier for which I seem to care more than I thought at first.

Do you, my good friend, want to be the one to take my place over there and help Aziyadé? I beg it of you with agony. . . . I feel sure that you will not refuse . . . and then, my brother, I will be yours body and soul, I will do anything in the world for you. . . .

During this crisis, perhaps what I am asking is less dangerous than you think. I will write to the attachés of the embassy, I will get influence, papers for you, I will even have you especially recommended to our ambassador. Will you do it? If you refuse to, send me a telegram immediately, and I myself will go. . . .

But if you accept, dear friend, don't lose a day or an hour or a minute. . . . This is what you will have to do. Put on a fez and go to Stamboul by way of the Kara-Keui bridge. You will find yourself opposite the big street of Onu-Capou. You will go up that street until you see the little mosque of At-Bazar-Bachi. Just before you reach it, you will come to an alley. You will enter it and away at the end you will see an old house painted red (the other houses are yellow). Near the entrance, on the first floor, there is a grilled window jutting

out. You will knock on the shutter of this window; Kadidja, the negress, lives there. I have spoken to you of her; she is a cunning and intelligent old creature who is devoted unto death to Aziyadé, her former mistress. You will knock six times in rapid succession; she will think it is I. Those six knocks were a signal on which we had decided. If the old woman is out, you will have to go back again. Some of the neighbours will probably question you; you know enough Turkish to say that you are a Circassian Mohammedan (you look like one). You will say that you want a charm; the old woman sells them and no one will be surprised.

When you have found Kadidja, you will give her this letter for Aziyadé. You will tell her that you come from me and that you will do all for her mistress that I would do. (Remember that she knows me under the name of Loti or Arif-Ussam.)

Give her your address. Explain to her that you will help Aziyadé escape if she has decided to go; that you will receive her in your own house in Galata and will keep her hidden. After that, you had better not return to Stamboul, so as not to arouse suspicions; the old woman may be watched. I trust Aziyadé with you as though you were my brother. You will see how de-

serving of love and devotion the little thing is, you will see how delightful she is, and you will then understand what I am doing.

Kadidja will be a useful assistant; she is the keenest old creature that I know; always follow her advice. Don't hesitate to let me know if you should need anything. And surely all that you do will be well done.

You will need money; go to Villier, the secretary of the embassy in Pera; he has five hundred francs of mine which I have just sent him to pay Abdullah Effendi, a money lender, borrowed at the time of my fire. He will give you this money which is providential and which I have written him to hand over to you. Villier is a good fellow, too, but not bold or devoted enough to do what I am asking of you, my dear Pogarritz, and which I would ask of none other. But he would get to work to help you should you need it.

I would prefer that Aziyadé leave on one of the mail boats of the Fraissinet company, for Marseilles. You will surely find some trustworthy person among the emigrants who will take care of her, and besides, I know nearly all the captains and you can use my name.

In Marseilles I will come to meet her.

Don't be afraid, my dear friend, that you are

embarking on a fantastic adventure; this is not such a one. I assure you, on my honour, that Aziyadé will be my wife as soon as she gets to France.

To M. Villier, Secretary to the French Embassy in Constantinople.

On board the Tonnerre,
Lorient, March 8, 1878.

My dear Friend:

If it is not too late, keep my money, the five hundred francs that the second mate on the *Simois* must have brought you. M. Pogarritz will ask you for it for me. Give it to him and Abdullah Effendi will wait. . . .

I know you don't like Pogarritz very well, but if he needs you for some difficult commissions I have asked him to carry out for me, help him, give him a little of your credit; in doing this for him, you will be doing me a favour. If necessary, speak a word for him at the embassy; the thing I have asked him to do is very dangerous. Give him your aid, in the name of the friendship you have often shown me.

He might secretly have to buy some of the clothes of a Frank woman; ask your mistress to buy these in memory of me.

Don't ask me any explanations now; I have neither the time nor the heart to give them to you. Do as I ask, my dear friend, and my gratitude will be both keen and deep. . . . You must know from these words what a dangerous thing is involved.

To Aziyadé.

On board the Tonnerre,
Lorient, March 8, 1878.

O MY DEARLY BELOVED AZIYADÉ:[1]

I received your heart-broken letter. I am answering your call.

No, I have forgotten nothing; not you, whom I love more than life and more than the sunlight, not Stamboul, not my sacred promise. . . .

What I swore to you, I swear again, by the Christian God and the Mohammedan God; by my soul, by the soul of my dead ancestors; I will keep the vow I have sworn. You have but to speak and I am ready to obey. . . .

But this moment is dreadfully important for both of us; in this supreme test in which you will decide our fate, listen to love's advice which I am giving you before you speak, before you call to me:

[1]This letter was written in Turkish.

So long as that old man, who has loved you dearly and respects you now, is on earth, stay with him, O you, and await what the mysterious future has in store for us. We are young and life stretches out far before our eyes. . . . But if he dies, if he is killed . . . But, if he is killed, listen still, my best beloved, to what I am going to say to you in anguish, because it cuts my life in half. . . . If he is killed, O best beloved, marry Osman Effendi! . . .

He, too, is young, he is rich and he loves you; you will be happy with him. Forget Loti, who brings unhappiness to those who come near him. With Osman Effendi you will have slaves, gardens, a high rank among the women of your country, and your place as a wife in the invisible world of the harems.

While with me! . . . Even after all the impossible difficulties were overcome, have you thought what being my wife would mean? To come alone, as a fugitive, to a distant country where no one understands your language . . . go unveiled, like a "foreign" woman; share my poverty; do your part of the difficult household tasks as your servants do and be all alone during the years when I am far away, sailing the seas. Never to see the blue sky, nor your country, nor your countrymen, nor even to hear a friendly

voice during long winters, longer than those in Stamboul, in this country nearer the cold star. . . .

But if you can accept all this, my beloved, if you love me so much that you will endure all, if you want to flee . . . then come, I adore you and I await you. . . .

Trust yourself with Kadidja and with my friend Pogarritz who will guard your honour and your life. Call me, if you want me near you. I have taken all steps for your escape and my friends are faithful. . . .

Come, dearly beloved, and I swear by your God and the God of the Christians that you will be my wife in France, that you will be mine according to the laws of men and my country. . . .

The 8th of March at Lorient was a dark winter day. The rain, which had started the night before, fell uninterruptedly until night.

I had been writing since six o'clock in the morning. At eleven o'clock the sky was so overcast that it was almost dark; I closed my shutters, lit the candles, and again sat down at my desk to continue my writing.

It was five o'clock in the evening when I had finished my three letters. (Aziyadé's letter

alone, which was written in Turkish, had taken me half the day.)

Then I opened my windows; a dismal dull daylight entered my room; it was still raining in the deserted gray street. I stayed at the window a long time, breathing the damp air of the outdoors.

I had come to a decision and had done as I felt I should do; peace descended upon me and I had only to wait.

When my letters had been mailed and all was irrevocable, I went to get Yves and spent the evening with him.

To his mother.

Lorient, March 22, 1878.

Beloved Mother:

This morning I returned to Lorient and found your letter awaiting me. You will be surprised to learn that I did not come from Paris, but from Plounés-en-Goelan, which is a little village in Brittany, forty miles from here near Paimpol.

I was "all dressed up" on Sunday to go to Paris, when a letter came from V. L. telling me that the affair (the publication of "Aziyadé") was concluded. It then seemed unnecessary to to go there as I would soon go through on my

ticket to Rochefort. Then I had to occupy myself during my leave. My sailor, Yves, who happened to be going to see his old mother, insisted that I go with him. Your blue sweater came in just right; a red belt and a cap completed an impromptu costume. . . .

. . . And so we both left on Sunday for Plounés, where Yves's return was celebrated like that of the prodigal son. Introduced as a "brother seaman," I spent four days there, fishing and taking walks in that picturesque country. Characteristic cottages of Brittany, good old women of olden days with their spinning wheels and distaffs, pancakes, cider, and springlike days.

We came home together this morning after a twenty-four hour journey. Everyone excepting my old hunchback, who knew of the adventure, thinks I came from Paris. . . .

Paris, March, 1878.

Two days spent in Paris, having been summoned to Michel Lévy, the publisher, by telegram. Two very exciting days which at least had the merit of getting me somewhat out of my dismal thoughts.

V. L. and Delguet fought over my brief hours of liberty and made a big fuss over me.

At Delguet's I met a person about whom I had written several pages in my notes some time ago: "La Fratine."

A changed, transformed little Fratine, turned into a lady, a very elegant little person, well-groomed, full of young charm and very naïve, who did the honours of "her house."

This evening she presided at a dinner given to V. L. and myself, during which we revived all our past memories. And when we spoke of Annecy, La Fratine was embarrassed; and as though her love for me had not left her heart, she bent over and kissed her little child who was sitting next to her. . . .

To Madame X—— in Paris.

Lorient, April, 1878.

. . . Pardon me if I have hurt you. You know that I have bad days in which my heart is closed and cold to all. . . .

It is true that on that last journey I saw you under a different aspect, but more congenial. . . . Up to that time I had thought of you as a happy person, possessing a certain positive philosophy which seemed all-sufficient to you; I thought you were comparatively calm and satisfied in those cold surroundings, I even

bore you some ill will to have found a sort of peace without those ideas of salvation and eternal life to which my heart has remained attached, in spite of my profound unbelief. . . .

On the contrary, when I spoke to you recently, I foresaw all that you have so distressedly written me; I saw that your heart was just as disturbed, just as tormented, just as despairing as mine; that at bottom you felt the same chaos, the same anguish, nothing left, nothing better, the same horrible emptiness. We probably have nothing for which to envy each other; but we feel too much the same way not to stay friends. . . .

You see, I am still very young and I can see with horror that I will soon arrive where you are. . . . I already want "to lie down and await the end. . . ."

And still, there is one thing that is everything in my life: love. . . . I have had wonderful mistresses and doubtless I will again have others. I have adored some women: I have experienced terrible grief when I thought that some day death would separate us, that all would end in dust. . . . I dreamed that they would at least bury us in the same grave, so that our ashes would mingle. . . .

And then I have forgotten them. I loved

others and dreamed the same dreams over them. . . . And time passes, taking me with it, and soon old age will come. . . .

I have little faith in friends. And still I have had more than any one in the world. . . . I have experienced many affections, many devotions. I have picked up robbers on the street and have taken them to my heart; and I found more youth and life, higher and less commonplace ideals in them than in my equals. . . . But all passes and will continue to pass. . . .

When the years come upon me, perhaps with suffering, and wrinkles and gray hair, when there will be no more possible love but that which I will buy, when I will be abandoned like a worn-out too-much-used object—then what resource will be left me, good God, but suicide?

Those whom you and I consider simpletons, naïve, those who are still bowed at the feet of Christ, let me assure you that those are the happy ones in this world. The agony of passing time, the terror of solitude, the horror of the coming nothingness, all that is unknown to them. They pass away, confident and at peace. I would give my life to possess their radiant illusion; I wish I were as senseless as those poor

inmates of asylums who think they are the rich and the powerful of the earth!

In lieu of this faith, if we could only hold on to something, to some hope, to some immortality. . . . But nothing at all! . . . Without that still radiant personality of Christ, all is terror and darkness. . . .

To M. Plumkett.

Lorient, April, 1878.

I am spending very sad days, dear friend, dismal, interminable days and mortally sombre nights. . . .

I still have my brother Yves with me but he is a transformed Yves, quite sedate, never getting drunk any more. All of our friends, our "brother seamen," are scattered, have sailed away; the last ones went to the South Seas in the *Lamotte-Picquet.*

And so, there is no more "robber band," nor any night disturbance, and Mother Hollichon no longer has the honour of serving us in her inn, as she did this winter.

Many an evening Yves and I, in our sailors' uniforms, could be seen walking down the dull street in which I live, in the cold April fog, turning into the dock and going past the canal

bridge. We often went to his home to sit before the fire, and his wife, Marie, would be busy ironing her wide white collars or making the little bonnets of the first-born, the "little seagull."

I am without any news of Aziyadé since the tragic letter I received on March 7th, and now that Achmet is dead, all communication with her is cut off.

I tried any number of means, I wrote innumerable letters in Turkish and in French to innumerable people and I have heard nothing.

I put my last hope in a certain Pogarritz, a good fellow, a faithful friend from there. But I learnt that he had enlisted in a Hungarian volunteer regiment and that he, too, had been killed by the Russians.

Time is passing and I don't know what to do. I dream of returning to the Orient and the ground is burning my feet. . . .

My heart fills with anguish when I think of Her. I swear to you, I love her dearly—I love her differently from the way I did at first. . . . I would give years of my life to receive one more of her illegible little letters which are so difficult to decipher. If one arrived, I would cry with joy. . . .

On board the Tonnerre,
Cherbourg, May, 1878.

. . . One month spent at Cherbourg. I would rather not have seen this country, which is so full of vivid memories, again. Memories of Jean, memories of our life together, memories of the war, of eight months spent here during that terrible winter of '70, eight months of a life of torture, eight months during which we suffered keenly. And then, memories of Jean's departure on the *Petrel*, in June, 1873.

I had determined never to set foot in this country; besides, Yves was, as a result of the affair of the three masters of the *Médée*,[1] consigned to stay on board and could not go with me.

I kept my word and stayed aboard for three weeks, but this morning I have been notified to go to the station personally to get a package.

I took my place in Yves's steam launch and landed on the jetty to which I came so sadly one morning in June five years ago to accompany Jean and to say good-bye as he was leaving for Senegal without me.

And to-day is also a lovely spring day, one of

[1] A story told in "Mon Frère Yves."

those first warm days of the year. The gardens are full of lilacs in bloom, but in spite of the blue sky this insipid little hole of a Cherbourg is sad and dull.

I ran through the city, not wanting to see anything and wanting to get back as soon as possible. And still every shop, every street corner, every district sends me a world of memories as I pass by. Our *pension*, our room, Emma's house, the station where we bought the war news every evening, the live oak—the only one in that part of the country—where we used to sit in remembrance of Fontbruant and "La Limoise."

And now, everything is over between Jean and me and I am still searching for the solution of the wretched tangle which irrevocably alienated him from me.

Alas, one cannot wrench from one's heart such an affection as I had for this lost brother without leaving deep and cruel wounds. The passing years heal them eventually, oblivion gently covers all things, and soon Jean's memory will be dead in my heart. But to-night his gentle face is here before me and I forgive him for all that he has done to me.

To Yves.

On board the Tonnerre,
Brest, June 9, 1878.

My dear Yves:

You simply have to go on shore this evening; go find the officer on guard and tell him that I want you at six o'clock. Manage it somehow. I have great plans and we will turn the streets upside down. You will be allowed to drink a little, for a treat. I am terribly unhappy and need some diversion and noise; you will enable me to have some.

You will need only to show my letter to the officer on guard, whoever he may be. If you miss the half-past five boat, I will send another for you.

When you arrive on shore, hurry home and put on civilian clothes and meet me at half-past six at the "Cabaret de l'Ancre Vert."

There will be four of us: big Barada, who is a friend of yours, and a new man, a captain of an American whaler, who is just our sort and will please you, I'm sure.

Good-bye, brother. Arrange it.

To M. Plumkett.

On board the Tonnerre,
Brest, June 20, 1878.

My dear Plumkett:

Since I have left that dismal Lorient, things are better; spring has come, everything around me is brighter, and I myself am feeling more alive.

I have had two mistresses. The first one was the wife of a captain of a trading vessel; she left me to go to her home. She was twenty-one years old, passionate and loving, the type of the fine people of northern Brittany. She cried when she said good-bye, but the curious thing was that the man whom she had never ceased to love and whom she loved more than anything in the world was her husband, the captain of the trading ship.

The second one was little Yvonne, whom you know. For a while she divided her favours between Allain, the quartermaster of the gunners, and me, Loti, your servant; and day before yesterday she made up her mind, and left me for Allain who is going to marry her. She, too, was a typical girl of Brittany, blonde and fair, with a serious expression; she was different from her kind—the "grisettes"—and when she walked

in the street with her head bent under the white wings of her headdress one turned to look at her.

"Yves the robber" has become quite reformed, as I have already told you, and hardly ever gets drunk any more. I live with him in a clean white lodging in the Recouvrance district at the house of an old Breton woman. On board they say that I have found the Eyoub of Brest. (But, alas, how different it is from the real one, the Eyoub of Stamboul!)

We spend our leisure playing cards, sitting quietly in a decent café—but still we look a little like two idle thieves. Or else we go to the fairs and shows in the Finistère.

In the long June nights, under the gray-veiled sky of Brittany, we walk through tall green grain, high grass filled with lovely pink flowers which grow only in this country, to reach the village fairs. The air is warm and perfumed.

The races, the games of ball, and the mountebanks still amuse us as though we were peasants. At eleven o'clock we go to our modest little house in Recouvrance. And healing sleep awaits us at home—the healthful and quiet dreamless sleep which suddenly brings us to the morrow.

I have changed a great deal in ten years; what difference there is between the "me" of to-day

and that dreaming, sentimental, frail eighteen-year-old boy who fled from all pleasure, from the noise of youth, and trailed his "poetic melancholy" through these same Brest streets where now I find gaiety and life!

Spring is a delicious season of the year, especially in Brittany. These northern springs, a little belated, a little veiled and uncertain at first, suddenly throw out to you flowers in profusion, leaves for shade, warm nights, and the songs of birds.

It is a magic surprise; one delights in it all the more because the winter was longer and more gloomy; one is penetrated with well-being, with the charm of spring, with the scent of fresh hay, the perfume of hawthorn.

Since my childhood no month of June has intoxicated me like this one, I have never experienced the physical sensation of spring, the renewal of life, the rising of the sap, and the powerful return of all the forces of nature so powerfully before this.

Believe me, my friend, there is nothing better than physical exercise for all mental suffering; there are no more sovereign remedies for all the ills of the spirit than health and vigour. There are no more sane pleasures than those of the people; the affection and friendship of an un-

cultured man who loves you uncontrolledly and unreservedly are the most reliable.

"Intellectual friendship" doesn't exist; it is a fiction of our sick minds. Friendship is friendship—something which comes from the heart like love and which cannot be analyzed.

You and I will never be more than imperfect, changeable, inconsistent, unconvincing friends. Let us not count too much on each other; we are too modern, too finely drawn, too skeptical—and we know each other too well, we see too far and too clearly. We find some pleasure in the exchange of our intimate thoughts, that's all; and we are somewhat like those magicians who could not look at each other without laughing. What can we possibly tell each other, I ask you, my dear fellow, which will not seem absolutely known, worn out, sophisticated?

But life is still beautiful, and health and youth are the only good things in this world.

Brest (Recouvrance), June, 1878.

It was two o'clock on a lovely spring day. I was half dozing in an armchair in my white room in Recouvrance, waiting until it was time for Yves to come ashore.

Suddenly a voice in the street startled me: it was a beggar singing two or three sad notes in a

low voice, so sad that they broke one's heart. What was especially curious was that this song reminded me of another, another that I had forgotten. . . .

Over there, in the Orient, when I lived in the Pera quarter, during the heat of the day in the summertime I heard a beggar under my window singing like this one; the voice had the same tone, the sad notes were almost the same. But the one who sang over there was a young Oriental, a blind young man whose thin face was regular and melancholy, who had wide-open light eyes without any pupils and who could not see. . . .

Everywhere on the Bosphorus, at Beïcos, at Scutari, at Thérapia, I heard this same voice later on; I saw this same man, wrapped in his white burnoose, walking straight ahead, night and day, with a regular and fatal step, feeling the ground with his stick and singing his plaintive song.

Later still, when winter came and Aziyadé was with me, we heard the blind beggar pass under our windows in Eyoub. He passed by in the evening, when dusk was falling, and his voice made us shiver in our mysterious house.

"Loti," said Aziyadé, "promise me that you will always give him something wherever you

find him; it would bring us bad luck if we should let him go by without giving him alms."

And she herself would often bring me her offering for him: little pieces of money, which she had kept for him. And I would go to the door to give it to him. (In the Orient one does not throw the money down, one gives it.)

One morning she had a fright. It was in February, a little before dawn, at the hour of the muezzin, and she went out alone, wrapped up in her gray *féredjé*. The ground was covered with a white sheet of snow which looked like a shroud.

At this silent hour, when one never saw any one, she saw a human shadow standing on the narrow plank at the entrance of the mosque. In the dim half light she recognized the beggar, motionless, with his head raised to the sky like a man praying.

To get into her little boat she had to touch the blind man's burnoose and pass by the blank look of his big white eyes. . . .

The one who was singing under my windows in Recouvrance was an old man of Brittany in the costume of the people of Plogastel. . . . It so happened that these two men, one a Breton, the other a Tartar, had, by accident, composed the same song of misery at the two ends of the earth. . . .

Brest, June 16, 1878.

This morning, on the big bridge of Brest, I gave Gildas Kermadec, Yves's brother, a long lecture for having sent my friend home dead drunk yesterday. I was very angry at the rascal and I even abused him a little.

But he was so contrite that I lost control of myself and after a moment I began to laugh and held out my hand, which he shook heartily.

The poor old Breton woman was right about him, too; her son Gildas has no head on him, but he is as good as gold.

On the evening of that day, June 16th, at nine o'clock, we three were walking along a covered country road near Brest, carrying lights. Three friends: De R——, Yves, and I.

De R——, ship's ensign, had been a devoted friend for eight months and he deserves that some mention be made of him in this paper: a high-minded Breton, a little too impressed by authority, a little too proud with his fellow men, excepting us—the confidant and assistant in all our doings and the best fellow in the world.

When he was leaving for Japan, he gave us a farewell dinner.

It had just taken place in a country restaurant

—a restaurant for special parties in a delightful nook, on the edge of the water, under a canopy of trees in which finches and nightingales sang. And all three of us were returning through the roads of spring. From below our candles lighted the arches of hawthorn, all white with odorous flowers and full of may-bugs and little birds.

The night was warm, dark, without any moon; not a breath of air stirred. Rarely had life seemed so sweet as on this lovely June night.

Nature had a charm that words cannot render. We sang as we walked. We stopped to rest at all the little inns of the countryside.

How good it was to be alive! How good it was, still very young and already old friends, to be in these scented paths of Brittany or seated with good cigarettes and glasses of good cider!

To the devil with all melancholy thoughts, with all the hollow dreams of dismal poets! There are still beautiful days in life, beautiful hours of youth and forgetfulness, there are still faithful hearts under the sun, good friends in the world.

Brest, June, 1878.

Certain tunes are connected in my memory with certain situations, certain periods in my life; they have the peculiar attribute of reviving

past impressions—sometimes the most distant and the most forgotten.

For example, the agitated times in the harbour of Salonica, in the spring of 1876, come back in their entirety when I hear Ophelia's song.

In the winter at Eyoub it was the muezzin song:

"Allah, illah Allah! ve Mohammed reçoul Allah!"

Brittany's song of the "Trois marins de Groix" epitomizes my melancholy days in Lorient.

This spring, in Brest, will be revived by the song sung in the tall grain:

Under Spain's lovely sky
Without food or drink
To travel,
To have for company
Only hunger and thirst
Is not good! Etc. . . .

Recouvrance, June 19, 1878.

Stormy night. It is blowing as though to tear down the housetops. I am a little worried as to what is happening on shipboard, where they might notice my absence.

All night long the wind shook our old house

at Recouvrance fearfully, tiles are loosening and falling into the street.

The landlady's cat cried at our door all night. . . . Distressing music and state of affairs.

Yves left at four o'clock in the morning. I am worried about his return to the ship. The rain is falling in torrents and the wind is blowing harder.

At seven o'clock I went to the big bridge of Recouvrance. The storm is at its height. But Yves is there; he managed to come in his yawl. There is a crowd on the bridge and on the docks —sailors, women, who look anxiously at the foam-covered white harbour.

When Yves saw me he ran to me, greatly excited:

"The *Tonnerre* is being dismantled!" he said. "A telegram has just come from Paris, and we will go into port to-morrow."

June 20.—The *Tonnerre* has entered into port at Brest. One more campaign ended. I am on watch all morning The rain doesn't cease.

In the afternoon I wait for Yves in our lodgings at Recouvrance which we will soon leave for ever. He doesn't arrive until half-past five. "Delayed because we emptied the hold," he said.

I want his picture, so I take him to Bernier, the photographer. Yves makes a great deal of fuss about posing; he says his face is too dark and he behaves very badly.

We went on board in the evening in a driving rain. Yves was in civilian clothes, a thing absolutely forbidden.

June 21.—Busy day; happy and great day for Yves. At eight o'clock in the morning I went on land, went to see the division commandant and to get a change of quarters for Yves.

At two o'clock the committee on promotion met on board the *Tonnerre*. Very stormy and argumentative meeting. Yves naturally has all the officers, headed by me, on his side—the second commandant, under the influence of the three masters of the *Médée* against him.

The commandant-in-chief doesn't say a word, allows the violent and passionate discussion to continue; then he turns smilingly to me: "Kermadec will have his five votes anyhow," he said, "because he will have mine."

The victory is won. Yves has been promoted to the first class in his grade.

One hour later, against all expectation, I obtained his orders for immediate sailing on the *Tonnerre*. He has nothing left to wish for; he

can leave to-morrow for Toulven, where his little son is awaiting him.

We left the ship at five o'clock, Yves as happy as a king, carrying his kit.

After dinner we met at the Brest fair; game of the "massacre of the innocents," merry-go-round, etc., for the last time. Yves, who is generally very serious, is as light-hearted as a child this evening; he plays innumerable tricks and cheats at all the games.

June 22.—A morning of farewells on board the *Tonnerre*. Everyone is leaving and the ship is emptying. . . .

Formal inspection and the changes and promotions made the day before are officially read:

"Yves Kermadec, promoted to the first class in his grade."

Nothing for the three masters of the *Médée*.

Then an old porter came to get my two hundred kilos of baggage and wheeled them as well as he could to Recouvrance. The weather was glorious; we felt as though we had a new lease on life after the long days of rain and anxiety we had just gone through, and Yves never tired of saying so.

My dear Yves left at two o'clock, happy at the thought of embracing Marie, his wife, and his

little son; to announce at home that he had been promoted and that he owed it to me. He was, nevertheless, very sad that we were parting, and I must admit that I, too, felt a heartache. Who knows whether blind fate will ever again unite us, poor sailors that we are?

I loved this Yves Kermadec dearly. Our affection had grown very quickly perhaps, because I had rescued him from terrible situations, saved him from many dangers.

And now, I am finishing the packing of my trunks in our lodging at Recouvrance. It is eight o'clock on a lovely June night; it is sadder yet for me to feel myself all alone on a lovely June night; these long evenings induce dreams and awaken all my dearest memories of the past.

People are coming gaily back from their walks and sailors pass beneath my window singing; the air is full of the flight of swifts, of the perfumes of summer.

Yves's bag, his silver quartermaster's whistle, and his cap marked "20-91-P" are still lying about on the furniture of this room to which he will not return.

It is a part of our existence which is finished for good. . . .

Paris, June, 1878.

Left Brest Monday, June 23d. The weather is still perfect, old Brittany is green and flowering.

We stopped ten minutes at Lorient. My friends, whom I had notified, were waiting at the station. In passing I greeted this melancholy gray city, where I had lived such deadly days, and that long avenue "de la Gare," down which I had so often paced in the winter nights.

At Redon I met an American engineer who kept me company until we got to Paris. This good gentleman speaks in English, I answer in Turkish; a very animated and original conversation results.

The next morning early, when I awoke, the look of the country had changed, old Brittany was far away; no more deep woods, no more gray rocks, no more old granite chapels, no more moss or lichens, nor tall grain with pink flowers scattered throughout; nothing but the dull ugly plaster country of the outskirts of Paris, suburban houses and fortifications.

I come back to these human beehives of brick or steel, to stove pipes, the nauseating odour of shops and coal, to an unhealthy and shameless street crowd, with deep disgust.

Yves's poor little cottage at Youlven was very modest, lost on the edge of a path in Brittany, but there there were freshness, honesty, and life. . . .

But still, the Luxembourg Garden has lovely nooks, beautiful trees, well-kept green lawns, benches where one can come in the early mornings in summer and spend quiet hours of thought without being disturbed by the passers-by. This garden recalls many memories of a transition period in my life; when I was seventeen, I often went and sat there.

And it was there, near the fountain of the Medicis, that I granted myself two hours of deep meditation and introspection, on the morning of the 24th of June, after I had left the train from Brittany, while waiting for a respectable hour at which one can appear before people.

My whole life appeared to me in strange colours; it spread out before me with its characters, its situations, its scenes in all countries of the earth—a long series of melancholy pictures which will dull with the years and will soon be revived by nothing whatsoever. I felt an immense longing for peace, for mental rest, and for solitude: the calm of the cloister would have been better for me after all than this clamorous Paris.

THE END